DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 142 PS 025 163

AUTHOR	Kohn, Alfie, Ed.
TITLE	Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business. A Collection of Articles.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-57517-026-4
PUB DATE	97
NOTE	198p.
AVAILABLE FROM	IRI/SkyLight Training and Publishing, Inc., 2626 South Clearbrook Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60005; phone: 800-348-4474, 847-290-6600; fax: 847-290-6609; e-mail: info@iriskylight.com; internet: www.business1.com/iri[underscore]sky/index.htm (Item #1486, $22.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Advertising; Computer Uses in Education; *Consumer Protection; Economic Factors; *Educational Change; Educational Trends; Educational Vouchers; Elementary Secondary Education; Labor Force; Mass Media Effects; Privatization; Public Schools; *School Business Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Channel One

ABSTRACT

From first-grade lessons promoting the products of Fortune 500 companies to education reform designed to suit the interests of big business, corporations are being granted more and more power to determine what happens in our schools. This book explores the implications of this trend, examining everything from advertising aimed at children to "school choice" plans and other attempts to privatize public education. The articles refute the charge that the schools are to blame for the nation's economic woes, describe how advertisers target students, reveal what really goes on in school-to-work and apprenticeship programs, reassess the place of computers in schools, and explore how learning suffers when we refer to students as "workers" or import other workplace metaphors and models. Following an introduction (Alfie Kohn) that dissects the demand for higher performance and specific standards that is at the heart of business-led school reform, the articles are: (1) "Schools, Scapegoats, and Skills: Educational Reform and the Economy" (David C. Paris); (2) "Restructuring Students for Restructured Work: The Economy, School Reform, and Non-College Bound Youths" (Carol Axtell Ray and Roslyn Arlin Mickelson); (3) "Despite Touted Gifts, Business Tax Breaks Cost Schools Money" (William Celis III); (4) "Ad Pitches Target Teen Consumers" (Melanie Wells); (5) "Channel One: But What about the Advertising?" (Bradley S. Greenberg and Jeffrey E. Brand); (6) "Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of American Schools" (Alex Molnar); (7) "Do Not Use as Directed: Corporate Materials in the Schools" (John Olson); (8) "Investors Look to Education as Possibility for High Flier" (Mary B. W. Tabor); (9) "Selling the Schools a Bill of Goods: The Marketing of Computer-Based Education" (Douglas D. Noble); (10) "Beyond the Workplace Metaphor: The Classroom as a Learning Setting" (Hermine H. Marshall); (11) "The Littlest Customers: TQM [Total Quality Management] Goes to School" (Alfie Kohn); (12) "Schooling in Capitalist America" (Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis); (13) "Youth Apprenticeship: High Schools for Docile Workers" (Hannah Finan Roditi); (14) "On to the Past: Wrong-Headed School Reform" (James Moffett); (15) "The Hollow Promise of School Vouchers" (Robert Lowe); (16) "Is School Privatization the Answer?" (Martin Carnoy); and (17) "Why Not Privatize?" (Deborah Meier). (HTH)

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A Collection of Articles

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Alfie Kohn

IRI SkyLight
TRAINING AND PUBLISHING, INC.
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business
First Printing 1997

Published by IRI/SkyLight Training and Publishing, Inc.
2626 S. Clearbrook Dr., Arlington Heights, IL 60005
800-348-4474 or 847-290-6600
FAX 847-290-6609
info@iriskylight.com
http://www.iriskylight.com

Creative Director: Robin Fogarty
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Type Compositor: Donna Ramirez, Christina Georgi
Formatter: Donna Ramirez
Cover and Illustration Designer: David Stockman
Graphic Designer: Heidi Ray
Production Supervisor: Bob Crump

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 1-57517-026-4
LCCCN: 96-80218

1936-12-96-McN
Item number 1486

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Introduction

The 500-Pound Gorilla

by Alfie Kohn

> *The best reason to give a child a good school . . . is so that child will have a happy childhood, and not so that it will help IBM in competing with Sony. . . . There is something ethically embarrassing about resting a national agenda on the basis of sheer greed.*—Jonathan Kozol

Imagine that the nation's governors have been invited to a summit to discuss the future of American business: the proper role of technology in the workplace, what can be done to improve the way companies are managed—that sort of thing. Because politicians may have limited familiarity with such matters, however, each governor has been invited to bring along one adviser: a school teacher.

The idea would strike most of us as absurd. In fact, it seems exactly as absurd as a summit on education in which each governor was accompanied by a corporate executive. The only difference between these two absurd scenarios is that the latter actually happened. In March 1996, a conservative Republican governor (Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin) joined IBM in hosting the "National Education Summit" at that company's suburban New York headquarters. There, various corporate chieftains joined most of the nation's governors in issuing proclamations about the need for "higher standards" and, to no one's surprise, the importance of technology in schools.

The first and most obvious problem with such a conference is that businesspeople are unlikely to be informed about the best theory, research, and practice on how children learn. But there is another reason to be concerned about the idea of letting corporate executives shape our country's educational agenda: it isn't just a lack of knowledge but a fundamental difference in objectives. Ultimately, the *goals* of business are not the same as those of educators. This simple truth, which lies at the core of the present book, is one that educators forget at their peril—or, more precisely, at the peril of their students.

Corporations in our economic system exist to provide a financial return to the people who own them: they are in business to make a profit. As individuals, those who work in (or even run) these companies might have other goals, too, when they turn their attention to public policy or education or anything else. But business *qua* business is concerned principally about its own bottom line. Thus, when business thinks about schools, its agenda is driven by what will maximize its profitability, not necessarily by what is in the best interest of students. Any overlap between those two goals would be purely accidental—and, in practice, as I will try to show, turns out to be minimal. What maximizes corporate profits often does not benefit children, and vice versa.

If corporations did indeed want to remake American education so as to promote their own interests, how would they set about doing that? Logically, their goal would be for schools to produce adequately skilled workers who will show up on time and obediently do their part to help these corporations triumph over their counterparts in other countries. Qualities such as a love of learning for its own sake, a penchant for asking challenging questions, or a commitment to democratic participation in decision making would be seen as nice but irrelevant—or perhaps even as impediments to the efficient realization of corporate goals.

Corporations might also want to see schools adopt managerial methods and metaphors, so that students become accustomed to measuring everything in sight, or following directions, or seeing themselves as workers rather than learners. These corporations might present high schools with a list of the qualities they would find it convenient for graduating students to possess, and ask that the curriculum be adjusted accordingly.[1] More broadly, businesses might push for privatizing the public schools or otherwise encourage the adoption of a profit-making sensibility when it comes to education. They might regard children not only as future workers but as potential customers, attempting to insert corporate propaganda into the curriculum and advertising into the classroom.

Because each of these items follows naturally from the overriding purpose of business, it is not particularly shocking or scandalous that corporations would want all these things to happen. What is striking is that they are able to get so much of what they want. The disproportionate role that business has in fact been granted in determining the country's educational priorities is revealed not only by the guest list for the National Education Summit, but by a range of other developments discussed throughout this book. Many of our elected officials have in effect handed over the keys to our schools to corporate interests: "We must tell the business community that, if it wants better employees and higher profits, it must be involved in what the schools teach and how they teach it," announced James B. Hunt, Jr., the Democratic governor of North Carolina.[2]

It doesn't take a degree in political science to figure out why politicians (and sometimes even educators) so often capitulate to business. For that matter, it isn't much of a mystery why a 500-pound gorilla is invited to sleep anywhere it wishes. But that doesn't make the practice any less dangerous.

* * *

As must be obvious by now, this book makes no pretense of offering a "balanced" treatment of the subject, with an equal number of pro- and anti-business essays. Rather, as a collection of complementary critiques, it is itself meant to provide a small measure of balance, a tiny counterweight, to the overwhelming and underchallenged corporate point of view that surrounds us. In part because of its vast resources, the business community has no trouble disseminating its opinions on education. Corporate leaders give speeches around the country. Business magazines publish lengthy articles on the subject. And every few months, another report on American schooling is released by the Business Coalition for Education Reform, the Business Roundtable, the Committee for Economic Development, or some other cluster of corporations.

These documents normally receive wide and largely uncritical press attention despite the fact that they all recycle the same buzzwords. Rather like a party game where players create sentences by randomly selecting an adjective from one list, then a noun from another, these dispatches from the business world seem to consist mostly of different combinations of terms like "world-class," "measurable," "accountability," "standards," and "competitiveness." Also, almost all of them begin by solemnly announcing the arrival of the twenty-first century.

One's eyes may glaze over at the clichéd vocabulary, but the vision of education it bespeaks is worth considering carefully. Take the word "competitive," which is always treated in these reports as something desirable. When business groups talk about education, they commonly characterize students as competitors—as people who do, or will, or should spend their lives trying to beat other people at something. Other nations are likewise depicted as rivals rather than as potential collaborators, and the Olympics is a favorite metaphor not only for schooling but for life itself. Over and over, we are told that the principal objective for students and schools and the United States, is to be Number One. Thus, to make our schools "world-class" means not that we should cooperate with other countries and learn but that we should compete against them and win.

Or consider the word "standards." If businesspeople mean by this word that schools ought to be given what they need to help students learn more effectively, then no one can object. But read their reports and listen to their speeches carefully, and it soon becomes clear that they have something more—or less—in mind. The references to "standards" suggest that *(a)* the main point of schooling is to raise students' performance with respect to *(b)* a very specific set of expectations for what is to be taught in *(c)* a few basic subjects, and that is best done by *(d)* efficiently transmitting a body of facts or skills to these students. The procedures for doing so should be *(e)* prescribed for, and imposed on, teachers, with *(f)* frequent measurement of results in the form of *(g)* standardized tests, whose scores will be the basis for *(h)* rewarding or punishing students, teachers, or administrators as a way of making sure performance improves.

As with the assumptions about competition, each of these components is either presented as hard-headed common sense or else regarded as so obvious that it requires no discussion at all. In fact, though, every one of these precepts is debatable, and together they describe an educational philosophy based on dubious assumptions about human motivation, learning, and public policy. Whole books can be—and, indeed, have been—written on each of these eight propositions; here, a few pages about the lot will have to suffice.

PERFORMANCE

Even the least controversial of these ideas, that we ought to focus our efforts on raising students' performance, proves surprisingly complicated upon closer inspection. Research by Carol Dweck, Carole Ames, John Nicholls, and other educational psychologists has shown that there is a clear difference between students who are led to concentrate on their performance (that is, on how well they are doing) and students who are led to concentrate on the material being learned (that is, on *what* they are doing). These two orientations often pull in opposite directions, so that an overemphasis on performance can undermine interest in the learning itself. While it does make sense at certain points in the learning process to help students think about how they can be more successful, this has to be done carefully and sparingly. Apart from reducing interest, too much emphasis on performance has been associated with three other disturbing results: students may come to attribute their success or failure to innate ability (as opposed to effort); they may become debilitated by failure (even if they are normally high achievers); and they may avoid challenge whenever possible (since the point is not to explore ideas or stretch themselves, but to maximize their success).

Educators—and those who support them—therefore ought to make their top priority the creation of a school environment that preserves and enriches students' *desire* to learn. The academic skills we care about are likely to be acquired by a student who remains motivated to figure things out; conversely, a student who has come to regard learning as a chore is not likely to do well over the long haul. Performance, in other words, is properly regarded as a by-product of motivation. When we focus on performance to the exclusion of motivation—when we don't attend to how interested students are in what they are doing—we may wind up with students who don't particularly *want* to improve, and are thus less likely to become lifelong, self-directed learners.

The idea that short-term educational results may be less important than long-term motivation has never, to the best of my knowledge, been endorsed or even discussed by any business group. In fact, if we were looking for a way to make students *less* interested in learning, we could hardly do better than to adopt the other components of the corporate agenda for our schools. A good part of that agenda consists of calling for educators to make students work harder: We need to demand more from our children! Give them more homework! Keep them in school longer! Make their textbooks more challenging! Require them to jump through more hoops to get a good grade!

My argument is not that "easier" is actually better than "harder" but rather that such a discussion ignores most of what matters about schooling. To judge what goes on in a classroom on the basis of how difficult the tasks are is rather like judging an opera on the basis of how many notes it contains that are hard for the singers to hit. People who miss the many multifaceted criteria (other than level of challenge) by which the quality of schooling might be judged tend to be those who rely on the metaphor of "work" to talk about the process of learning (see chapter 10). Particularly if we are sensitive to the importance of how students think and feel about what they are doing, it turns out that merely ratcheting up the standards may well be counterproductive over the long run.[3]

NARROW STANDARDS

The demand for higher performance is frequently accompanied by an insistence that the standards for that performance must be very specific. Yet, when asked for advice on the subject, former U.S. commissioner of education Harold Howe II summarized a lifetime's work with schools in four words: national (and, presumably, state) standards, he emphasized, should be "*as vague as possible.*" Howe's point was that the more specific the requirement for what students must know or be able to do, the less responsive educators can be to what distinguishes one student—and one circumstance—from another. It makes matters worse when we demand that all students at a given grade level must be able to perform a certain task. This guarantees that some children will be branded as failures because they do not learn at the same pace as their peers.

Very specific, results-oriented standards do not suggest a commitment to excellence. They suggest a commitment to an outmoded, top-down approach to controlling production that is reminiscent of Frederick Taylor's "scientific management" model for factories.

(Ironically, Taylor's assembly-line paradigm has been supplanted in many corporations by the work of W. Edwards Deming and others in the Quality movement, yet it continues to drive the corporate view of educational standards.) Elliot Eisner of Stanford University has seen the connection between Tayloresque thinking and rigid performance standards for students. He went on to observe:

> The language of standards is by and large a limiting rather than a liberating language. . . . It distracts us from paying attention to the importance of building a culture of schooling that is genuinely intellectual in character, that values questions and ideas at least as much as getting right answers. . . . The challenge in teaching is to provide the conditions that will foster the growth of those personal characteristics that are socially important and, at the same time, personally satisfying to the student. The aim of education is not to train an army that marches to the same drummer, at the same pace, toward the same destination. Such an aim may be appropriate for totalitarian societies, but it is incompatible with democratic ideals.

Thoughtful opponents of specific standards would rather guide than dictate; they are motivated by respect for teachers as professional educators and respect for differences among learners. Unhappily, the most visible challenge to the business-led emphasis on detailed academic standards has come from fundamentalist Christians and ultraconservatives fearful of the role of the federal government in setting those standards. This has led to a skewed debate about education in which the nature of teaching and learning is often overlooked entirely.[4]

BASIC SUBJECTS

Just as the standards for a given subject may be too narrow or specific, so the number of subjects to which students are exposed may be too few. The fewer subjects we teach, the fewer capabilities we value, and the more students who are likely to feel excluded and uninterested. Consider a classroom in which only certain talents (such as those needed for verbal-analytical tasks) count for anything. The most likely feature of such a classroom is an informal but entrenched status hierarchy, where students are sorted from excellent to poor. By contrast, the use of tasks that call for many different kinds of skills helps more students to feel competent—and ultimately to become competent.

This doesn't mean that reading and math don't matter the evidence suggests that when these subjects are taught effectively (more about which later), other subjects can be included in the curriculum without reducing competence in the basics. The answer, in other words, is to teach more effectively rather than to teach fewer things. But if we do choose to focus relatively more energy on the three R's, that decision ought to be made on the basis of the kind of people we want children to be—not on the basis of which skills corporations demand of their employees.

It might also be noted that the back-to-basics doctrine tends to exclude—and sometimes to dismiss explicitly—the importance of social skills, moral development, and affective learning. Not only can we make a case that schools should be used to help students become good people, but we can also point to empirical evidence that intellectual development is more likely to take place when schools are transformed into caring communities. That transformation requires time, resources, and above all, an inclusive view of learning. The bottom line is that a relentless focus on, say, multiplication not only deprives students of the chance to become socially skilled or artistically enriched—it also may perpetuate an environment that isn't even optimal for learning multiplication.[5]

TRANSMISSION

Listing a bunch of facts and skills that every *n*th grader must know has been described quite aptly as a "curriculum of superficiality." But the problem with this model goes beyond the particular content that appears on the list—or even the specificity of the content. The real trouble is with the tacit theory of learning on which such an approach is based. That theory, which holds that we can transmit knowledge or skills *to* students, is out of step with the best thinking in the field. Children are not empty vessels to be filled with information; they are active meaning makers, testing out theories and trying to make sense of themselves and the world around them. Learning comes from discovering surprising things—perhaps from grappling with a peer's different perspective—and feeling the need to reformulate one's own approach. It entails playing with words and numbers and ideas, coming to understand these things from the inside out and making them one's own. Skills are acquired in the course of arriving at that deep and personal understanding, and in the context of seeking answers to one's own questions.

When children are instead required to accept or memorize ready-made truths, they do not really "learn" in any meaningful sense of the word. This is what we witness when students have to do problem sets in math, multiplying rows of naked numbers; or make their way through worksheets until they can identify vowels or verbs; or slog through textbook lessons about scientific laws or historical events; or spend most of the day listening to somebody lecture. This "transmission of right answers" approach characterized the schooling to which most of us were subjected, and despite exciting demonstrations that things could be better, it also characterizes the schooling that businesspeople, among other constituencies, seem determined to foist on another generation.

In their calls for specific standards, more testing, basic skills, and so on, corporate-style educational "reform" tacitly accepts—and sometimes explicitly endorses—the transmission model.[6] The irony here is palpable: corporate reports vibrate with alarm over how much students today don't know when they get out of school—yet it is the transmission model that contributes mightily to this problem. The educational crisis we are allegedly facing has occurred under a "drill and skill," test-driven system in which students are treated as passive receptacles rather than active learners. Yet the business prescription is: more of the same.[7]

CONTROL

The performance standards set out for schools are frequently offered not as guidelines (along with the help necessary to meet them) but as requirements to be imposed on educators. The operative word in such discussions is "accountability," which almost always turns out to mean tighter control over what happens in classrooms by people who are not in classrooms. The effect on learning is comparable to the effect a noose has on breathing.

When teachers are required to prove their students can meet very specific standards, or to work their way through a prescribed curriculum, or to spend their time preparing students for standardized tests, the people imposing these requirements are doing things *to* teachers rather than working *with* them. They are relying on power to try to compel certain results. This is a tendency that can be witnessed in many arenas: people higher up in a hierarchy often attempt to maximize efficiency by tightly directing the actions of those down below. Unfortunately, when people's basic need for autonomy is violated, the costs are usually high—in psychological terms, and ultimately with respect to effectiveness.

This is as true in classrooms as it is in countries. When teachers are held strictly "accountable" for their students' performance on tests—when they feel pressured to produce results—they, in turn, tend to pressure their students and remove opportunities for the students to direct their own learning. Research has shown that these students are less likely to learn successfully than are their counterparts in classrooms where the teachers had simply been invited to "facilitate the children's learning." The more we pressure teachers to *make* their students perform, in other words, the less well the students actually perform.

Much the same is true of our posture toward the students themselves. Rather than trying to figure out how we can *support* students' desire to explore what is unfamiliar, to develop a competence at (and a passion for) learning, the prescription offered by the business world has more to do with *demand:* students are seen as "workers" who have an obligation to do a better job. One corporate executive, for example, declared that children must be "made to understand the importance of learning." If, to paraphrase a famous critical report, an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America a mediocre educational system, it could have devised no better plan than to establish mechanisms for tightly controlling what students and teachers do.[8]

QUANTIFICATION

We have to go back several centuries to find the origin of what one writer has called "the prosaic mentality": a preoccupation with that which can be seen and measured. Any aspect of learning or life that resists being reduced to numbers is regarded as vaguely suspicious. By contrast, anything that appears in numerical form seems reassuringly scientific: if the numbers are getting larger over time, we must be making progress. Concepts like intrinsic motivation and intellectual exploration are hard for the prosaic mind to grasp, whereas test scores, like sales figures, can be calculated and charted and used to define success and failure.

In a broad sense, it is easier to measure efficiency than effectiveness, easier to assign a number to how well we are doing something than to whether what we are doing makes sense. But the heirs of Descartes and Bacon, Skinner and Taylor, rarely make such distinctions. More to the point, they fail to see how the process of coming to understand things is not always linear or quantifiable. Contrary to virtually every business discussion of education, meaningful learning does not proceed along a single dimension such that we can nail down the extent of improvement. In fact, as Linda McNeil, professor of education at Rice University, has observed, "Measurable outcomes may be the least significant results of learning."

If, moreover, we are interested in students' *motivation* to learn, it becomes clear that more motivation—even assuming we could reduce this to numbers—is not always better than less motivation for the simple reason that the amount is less important than the kind. (A lot of extrinsic motivation is not particularly desirable.) To talk about what happens in schools as moving forward or backward in specifiable degrees is not only simplistic, in the sense that it fails to capture what is actually going on; it is destructive, because it can change what is going on for the worse. Once teachers and students are compelled to focus only on what lends itself to quantification, such as the number of grammatical errors on a composition, or the number of state capitals memorized, the process of intellectual development has been severely compromised.[9]

STANDARDIZED TESTS

The sort of quantification of educational performance that is most commonly used—and, once again, accepted unreflectively by those in the business world—is the traditional machine-scored, norm-referenced, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-bubble exam. The goal of all that control, the product of all that transmission, indeed the very definition of performance comes down to better scores on standardized tests. The limits of those tests, along with their pernicious effect on creative teaching and learning, are well-known to educators. Rote recall of facts and algorithms is typically emphasized above deep understanding—and *interest* in learning is, of course, ignored altogether. But those in the corporate world typically avoid all discussion of what these tests really measure and of what happens when educators must become preoccupied with the results of these tests.

A respected middle-school teacher in northern Wisconsin stood up at a community meeting not long ago and announced that he "used to be a good teacher." His use of the past tense surprised and disturbed those sitting in the auditorium, and he explained that he had lately begun to rely on a textbook for his lessons, having abandoned the innovative learning projects that his students had loved (and from which they had benefited). The reason, he explained, was that he was increasingly being held accountable for raising students' standardized text scores: that was what administrators in his district were using as the indicator of success. Now he was giving them what they demanded, and his students were the losers.

Multiply this teacher's experience by the tens of thousands, and then add the frustrated struggle of thousands more who haven't given up yet: those who persist in being innovative educators despite the growing emphasis on these tests. While educators around the country understand the deadening effect of having to turn over more and more of their time in the classroom to test preparation, the people who are much less likely to understand this are those with the power to demand ever more frequent administration of these tests: school board members, state legislators, and business leaders. Moreover, a bad thing is made even worse when newspapers report the scores of particular schools or districts—making the results of the tests that much more salient and setting these schools or districts against each other in a competition. Apart from the meaninglessness of comparing one school's performance to another's—that is, of emphasizing relative rather than absolute scores—educators who are defined as rivals are far less likely to engage in the kind of exchange and collaboration that leads to excellence.[10]

CARROTS AND STICKS

Not surprisingly, when corporate leaders talk about getting educators to do this or that, they fall back on devices described as incentives and disincentives—in plainer words, bribes and threats. Their premise, if it were spelled out, is that the way to make change is either to dangle something desirable in front of people if you get the results you want or to threaten something unpleasant if you don't. Rather than providing more resources to the schools that are struggling, this approach would therefore use budgets as an instrument to get compliance: give or withhold money on the basis of test scores.

By the same token, business groups often recommend making it easier to fire teachers and making more of their salaries contingent on how well their students perform.

Apart from the inherent problems of control, there are specific problems with each of these methods of imposing control. The use of punitive sanctions creates a climate of fear, and fear generates anger and resentment. It also leads people to switch into damage-control mode and act more cautiously. Human beings simply do not think creatively and reach for excellence when they perceive themselves to be under threat. The philosophy that underlies the use of "disincentives" has been deftly satirized by a sign posted in some offices and classrooms: THE BEATINGS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL MORALE IMPROVES. When teachers are deprived of job security or pay raises in an effort to compel them to teach better, the usual result is that they become demoralized rather than motivated.

What is true of sticks is ultimately true of carrots as well. The simplistic call to reward excellence (or what passes for excellence in the minds of many observers) overlooks an enormous body of research and experience demonstrating that rewards are just "control through seduction." One of the most thoroughly documented findings in social psychology is that people tend to lose interest in whatever they had to do to receive a reward: the intrinsic motivation that is so vital to quality (to say nothing of quality of life) often evaporates in the face of extrinsic incentives. More specifically, researchers have found that people's interest in a task ordinarily plummets when they are acutely aware of being evaluated on their performance—even if the evaluations they receive are positive. "When subjects expect rewards for attaining a specified level of competence, the anticipation of performance evaluation interferes with intrinsic interest," one group of investigators has concluded.

Nor does this exhaust the problems with the behaviorist tactic of using artificial inducements, such as money, to buy results. Rewarding "good" teachers—even assuming we can find criteria more reasonable than students' test scores—is likely to generate rivalry and resentment. And it is also apt to undermine innovative teaching, since innovation by definition isn't certain and a reward-driven individual is inclined to minimize risk. Likewise, tell a student that she should learn something in order to pass a test, satisfy an instructor, or win a prize, and the student will quickly come to look upon the process as a chore rather than a source of intellectual excitement. To use rewards with teachers *and* students is a recipe for precisely the sort of problems that we already find in schools—which, come to think of it, are already marinated in behaviorism.[11]

* * *

Of course, businesspeople are not alone in endorsing the approach to education that these separate tenets comprise. From Congress to local school boards, politicians also uncritically call for higher standards, incentives, and all the rest of it.[12] So, shamefully, does the head of one of the nation's teachers' unions: Albert Shanker's opinions are usually indistinguishable from those of corporate executives, so business groups happily cite publications of the American Federation of Teachers in their own reports.

Still, this model is particularly consistent with a marketplace mentality, and so it is no coincidence that business generally takes the lead in formulating and promoting it. It is at least possible to imagine that a state legislator presented with the case against standardized testing, or against the transmission approach to teaching, would reconsider. This is harder to imagine in the case of corporate executives, which brings us back to the question of ultimate goals. For business, the point is not to promote active participation in democratic institutions, or social justice, or even the well-being or enrichment of the students themselves. The point is sales, revenues, profits.

Some people in the business world have complained that this characterization is unfair and out-of-date. They insist that today's executives want students who are skilled at teamwork and can cooperate with those who have different talents and interests. Today's companies need people who are critical thinkers and problem solvers. Their goals, therefore, are not so different from our own. But if this were really true, we would see cutting-edge corporations taking the lead in demanding a constructivist approach to instruction, where students' questions drive the curriculum, as well as a "whole language" model for teaching literacy. They would be demanding that we throw out the worksheets and the textbooks, the decontextualized skills and rote memorization. They would demand greater emphasis on cooperative learning and complain loudly about the practices that undermine collaboration (and ultimately quality)—practices like awards assemblies and spelling bees and honor rolls. They would insist on heterogeneous, inclusive classrooms in place of programs that segregate and stratify and stigmatize. They would stop talking about "school choice" (referring to programs that treat education as a commodity for sale), and start talking about the importance of giving *students* more choice about what happens in their classrooms. They would publish reports on the importance of turning schools into caring communities where mutual problem-solving replaces traditional obedience-based discipline.

The sad truth, of course, is that when business leaders do address these issues, their approach tends to be precisely the opposite: they write off innovative, progressive educational reforms as mere fads that distract us from raising test scores. While there may be more talk in boardrooms these days about teamwork, it is usually situated in the context of competitiveness—that is, working together so we can defeat another group of people working together. While "social skills" are often listed as desirable attributes, business publications never seem to mention such qualities as generosity or compassion. While it is fashionable to talk about the need for future employees who can think critically, there is reason to doubt that corporate executives want people with the critical skills to ask why they (the executives) just received multi-million-dollar stock option packages even as several thousand employees have been thrown out of work. (More concretely, corporations may encourage high school English teachers to assign students the task of writing "a sample personnel evaluation,"[13] but they seem less keen on inviting students to critically analyze whether such evaluations make sense, or who gets to evaluate whom.) What business wants from its workers in the twenty-first century—and, by extension, from our schools—may not be so different after all from what it wanted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This is why it is so important for educators to be wary of innocuous-sounding "business-school partnerships" even though it can be difficult for a public school starved of resources to turn down funds from anyone. This is why it is so important for a democratic society to limit the power that corporations have in determining what happens in, and to, our schools. Note I do not say that corporations should be silenced. Ideally, we would say to business leaders something like the following:

> Thank you for your latest list of what you would like schools to do, which skills you would like graduating students to have, and so forth. We appreciate your advice. As educators working with parents and with the students themselves, we will be happy to consider your opinions . . . right alongside the opinions of labor unions, college admissions officers, philosophers, social scientists, journalists, elected officials, and other interest groups. Your recommendations will carry particular weight when they comport with those of other parties—for example, in emphasizing the importance of making sure that students know how to think logically. When they seem out of step with what others are saying, and ultimately of benefit only to you, then those suggestions will be viewed with the appropriate skepticism. We recognize, of course, that as the leaders of giant corporations, you represent financial resources far beyond those of other interest groups. We are sure that you realize, however, that to give your recommendations any greater weight because of that fact would violate core democratic principles.

Not long ago, as Joel Spring pointed out, one would have been branded a radical for suggesting that our schools were geared to meeting the needs of corporations. Today, corporations freely complain when our "educational system . . . fails the business sector,"[14] and they openly try to make over the schools in their own image. It's up to the rest of us to firmly tell them to mind their own businesses.

NOTES

1. The Business Coalition for Educational Reform frankly asserts that "workplace performance requirements of industry and commerce must be integrated into subject-matter standards and learning environments." (See that coalition's booklet "The Challenge of Change: Standards to Make Education Work for All Our Children," published in January 1995 by the National Alliance of Business.)

2. James B. Hunt, Jr., "Education for Economic Growth," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 1984.

3. Some references to the work of Dweck, Ames, and Nicholls are included in chapter 11 of this book. Also see Martin V. Covington, *Making the Grade* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Martin L. Maehr and Carol Midgley, "Enhancing Student Motivation: A Schoolwide Approach," *Educational Psychologist* 26 (1991): 399–427.

4. See Harold Howe II, "Uncle Sam Is In the Classroom!" *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1995: 374–77; and Elliott W. Eisner, "Standards for American Schools: Help or Hindrance," *Phi Delta Kappan*, June 1995: 758–64.

5. For an intriguing argument in favor of a wider vision of schooling, see Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992). Howard Gardner's well-known theory of multiple intelligences is certainly relevant to this general discussion; less well-known is Elizabeth Cohen's contribution to the literature on cooperative learning, which emphasizes a curriculum requiring a range of skills so as to minimize status distinctions among students. (See, for example, her book *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*, 2d ed. [New York: Teachers College Press, 1994].) That students' interest in academic learning may depend on the extent to which classrooms are experienced as caring communities—and thus the extent to which time is spent on affective issues—has been demonstrated in Victor Battistich et al., "Schools as Communities, Poverty Levels of Student Populations, and Students' Attitudes, Motives, and Performance: A Multilevel Analysis," *American Educational Research Journal* 32 (1995): 627–58.

6. A 1996 publication by the Business Roundtable approvingly describes how one state was convinced to eliminate the phrase "construct meaning" from its standards for reading instruction, substituting the blander and more traditional word "understand." (See *A Business Leader's Guide to Setting Academic Standards*, p. 22.)

7. Writers from John Dewey to Paulo Freire to John Holt have identified and criticized what I am calling the transmission model of instruction, while any of a number of writings in the constructivist tradition offer an alternative. A very readable introduction to the subject is provided by Jacqueline Grennon Brooks and Martin G. Brooks, *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms* (Alexandria, Va.: ASCD, 1993), and a more detailed summary of the most effective strategies for teaching reading, writing, math, science, and social studies is contained in Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde, *Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993). It is in this book that the phrase "curriculum of superficiality" is used to describe the approach popularized by E.D. Hirsch Jr.

8. For a brief discussion of the support vs. demand models, see Alfie Kohn, "Grading: The Issue Is Not How but Why," *Educational Leadership*, October 1994: 38–41. On the counterproductive effects of trying to control what teachers do, see Cheryl Flink, Ann K. Boggiano, and Marty Barrett, "Controlling Teaching Strategies: Undermining Children's Self-Determination and Performance," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59 (1990): 916–24; and Edward L. Deci et al., "Effects of Performance Standards on Teaching Styles: Behavior of Controlling Teachers," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 74 (1982): 852–59. The quotation about making students understand the importance of learning comes from a speech given by Owen B. Butler at the second Fortune Education Summit in Washington, D.C., October 1989.

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9. On the prosaic mentality, see chapter 6 of George W. Morgan, *The Human Predicament: Dissolution and Wholeness* (New York: Delta, 1970). Linda McNeil's quotation is taken from her book *Contradictions of Control* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. xviii.

10. See D. Monty Neill and Noe J. Medina, "Standardized Testing: Harmful to Educational Health," *Phi Delta Kappan* May 1989: 688–97; a report by the Center for the Study of Testing entitled "The Influence of Testing on Teaching Math and Science in Grades 4–12" (available from CSTEEP, 323 Campion Hall, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167); and various reports from FAIRTEST, 342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139.

11. Extensive documentation on the failure of incentives—and of carrot-and-stick psychology, more generally—is contained in Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993); Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985); and Mark R. Lepper and David Greene, eds., *The Hidden Costs of Rewards: New Perspectives on the Psychology of Human Motivation* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1978). The phrase "control through seduction" appears in the Deci and Ryan book, p. 70. The other quotation about evaluation and rewards is from Judith M. Harackiewicz, George Manderlink, and Carol Sansone, "Rewarding Pinball Wizardry: Effects of Evaluation and Cue Value on Intrinsic Interest," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47 (1984), p. 293.

12. Not only do public officials frequently follow in lock-step with business on issues of educational policy, but they typically endorse a significant role for business in determining that policy. Donna Shalala, secretary of Health and Human Services under President Clinton, and widely regarded as a liberal Democrat, has said of business that "education needs this powerful voice." (Quoted in Jonathan Weisman, "The New Player: Educators Watch with a Wary Eye as Business Gains Clout," *Teacher Magazine*, October 1991, p. 11.)

13. The Business Roundtable points approvingly to just such assignments in Fort Worth, Texas, claiming that they "have the effect of motivating students." See *A Business Leader's Guide to Setting Standards*, p. 21.

14. This paraphrase of a report released by the Committee for Economic Development appears in Catherine S. Manegold, "Study Says Schools Must Stress Academics," *New York Times*, 23 September 1994, p. A22.

Section 1

Truth vs. Fiction: Debunking Business Claims about Education

Perhaps you are familiar with the principle of "The Big Lie," which holds that even the most outrageous falsehood, if repeated often enough, can come to be accepted as the truth. Today's example is the proposition that our schools are responsible for the problems with the U.S. economy. Because students aren't crammed with enough skills, we wind up with employees who drag down our entire industrial apparatus.

Of course, this is just one more example of a tendency to place the blame for the widespread suffering that occurs in our economic system almost everywhere except on the economic system itself. Sometimes the most vulnerable members of our society are faulted for their own misery: they are said to be unemployed because of an absence of "personal responsibility"—rather than, say, an absence of jobs. The obvious solution, then, is to stop helping them so they will summon the initiative to solve their own predicament, presumably by employing themselves.

The comparable tactic of blaming the schools for a loss of corporate productivity is especially audacious in light of the fact that those most likely to propound this theory are the corporate executives directly responsible for the success or failure of their organizations. But regardless of who takes this position, or whom it benefits, the point is that blaming the schools for economic difficulties is bad social science. Some of the reasons are calmly and ably laid out in our first two chapters, one by David C. Paris and the other by Carol Axtell Ray and Roslyn Arlin Mickelson. They explain that the availability of meaningful work is more likely to influence the study habits of students than the other way around.

If productivity problems cannot accurately be blamed on schools, that raises questions about the agenda for educational reform offered by the same people who have misdiagnosed the problem. At any rate, it certainly ought to raise eyebrows when the people lecturing educators about deficient academic standards are top executives at AT&T, IBM, Boeing, and other corporations notorious for firing tens of thousands of their employees.

Moreover, the same corporations that are so quick to point an accusing finger at our educational system are even quicker to look for ways to avoid funding that educational system. Senator Howard Metzenbaum had no trouble making this connection:

> In speech after speech, it is our corporate CEOs who state that an educated, literate work force is the key to American competitiveness. They pontificate on the importance of education. They point out their magnanimous corporate contributions to education in one breath, and then they pull the tax base out from under local schools in the next. Businesses criticize the job our schools are doing and then proceed to nail down every tax break they can get, further eroding the school's ability to do the job.[1]

Indeed, companies have been remarkably successful at reducing their contributions to the public treasury that funds education, frequently managing to pit one state against another in a race to lower corporate taxes. On the federal level the statistics speak for themselves: in 1945, 35.4 percent of U.S. tax revenues came from corporations; in 1995, it was 11.6 percent.[2] In the final article in this section, William Celis describes how schools are suffering as a direct result of the tax breaks companies manage to wangle for themselves.

NOTES

1. Metzenbaum was quoted in Jay Taylor, "Desperate for Dollars," *American School Board Journal*, September 1992, p. 23, which was, in turn, cited in Alex Molnar, *Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of America's Schools* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1996), p. 7.

2. Source: Office of Management and Budget, federal budget for FY 1997, published in February 1996.

Schools, Scapegoats, and Skills: Educational Reform and the Economy

by David C. Paris

There can be little doubt that when the National Commission on Excellence in Education declared that America was "a nation at risk" it primarily meant economic risk. While acknowledging the role education plays in civic and cultural life, most of the document's warnings concerned the consequences of lagging behind our economic competitors in education. An emphasis on the link between educational performance and economic competitiveness has been a rhetorical constant in the reform movement ever since. Recently there have been a number of studies, both directly by government agencies or supported by them, that variously explore the "workforce crisis," discuss the desirability of "investing in people," and pose the stark choice of "high skills or low wages." The Labor Department SCANS report (1991) puts the matter bluntly in its title, "What Work Requires of Schools." It is either stated or implied that schools play an important role in improving our economic competitiveness and have not been doing their job well.

Or course, at some level the proposition that educational achievements will have economic impacts is indisputable. Still, much of the rhetoric about the need to reform education to enhance economic productivity and competitiveness often conflates or compresses together several claims and ways of making the argument. This makes analysis more difficult, since it is not clear what exactly is being claimed and what it implies for policy. Nevertheless, we need to disentangle the various claims about education and the economy, asking whether and in what ways this vague consensus, and the policy implications drawn from it, are justified.

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Perhaps the simplest way to begin to sort these claims is by distinguishing "macro" from "micro" arguments. Much of the rhetoric linking education and the economy treats educational performance as a kind of macroeconomic lever analogous to taxes, spending, or the money supply. Raising educational performance will enhance competitiveness. This claim, taken historically, may imply or be taken to imply that schools were a factor in America's relative economic decline in recent years—an impression reinforced by the fact that the beginnings of both our economic and educational problems are often traced back to the early 1970s (Bishop 1989a). Taken prospectively, the argument is that our economic problems are exacerbated by the schools' poor performance, and any economic revival must include significant educational improvement.

Certainly over the long run, if a significant percentage of our workforce has basic skills comparable to those found in less economically developed societies, we will have difficulty competing with other advanced industrial societies. A well-developed secondary (and postsecondary) system of education is characteristic of what Baumol calls the "club" of advantaged nations; it helps them to develop or absorb technology or to discover other ways of increasing productivity (Baumol, Blackman, and Wolff 1989, especially chapter 9). At the same time, however, it is easy to overstate this connection, and there is more than a little scapegoating here. First, there are some obvious, intuitive objections to the idea that educational performance was a significant factor in our economic difficulties. The decline of American industries such as auto or steel was more a result of the trade policies of various governments, exchange rates, investment and savings decisions, ways of organizing the workplace, and patterns of union-management relations than the academic achievements of the workforce. More specifically, any aggregate evidence about the relationship of educational and economic decline is mixed. Average years in school have increased as the economy has declined, and one study suggests that only educational attainment and favorable weather conditions for farmers contributed *positively* to the growth in the 1970s. Causal factors other than declining test scores, such as the shift from manufacturing to services, may provide more plausible explanations for slowed productivity growth (Denison 1982, pp. 36–39; Burtless 1990, especially chapter 1).

Perhaps a more common and more prospective argument suggests a growing gap between the skills demanded by the American economy and the "supply" of skills students have as they emerge from the schools. Business, it is argued, cannot find students who have the technical skills for the new workplace in which computers and other new technologies play a major role. For less skilled jobs, applicants lack basic skills of literacy and numeracy, let alone abilities to think critically and independently. These failings are compounded by bad attitudes and work habits. Schools, it is claimed, are simply not producing the "human capital" business needs, creating a workforce crisis. This crisis can only get worse as skilled jobs go abroad or disappear altogether and as requirements for remaining jobs inevitably increase. "Overall the skill mix of the economy will be moving rapidly upscale" (Hudson Institute 1987, p. 96).

It is important to note here that any current or future gap is likely more a function of changes in demand than in supply. Average levels of achievement in reading, writing, math, and science proficiency in 1990 were about the same as those in 1971. There have also been areas of clear improvement: high school completion rates for 25–29 year olds in that period rose from 78% to 85% and "the large gap in achievement between whites and minorities has narrowed substantially" (Alsalam, Ogle, Rogers, and Smith 1992, pp. 40–41). Although SAT scores have declined, there has been an ongoing debate about how much of that decline is attributable to the increase in the pool of test takers, the performance of various subgroups, or a variety of other factors (Murray and Herrnstein 1992). The supply of educational skills, then, has not clearly and substantially changed.

The alleged "skills gap" reflects a shift in the composition of the demand for labor. The service sector has expanded and manufacturing jobs have declined; students without the skills to compete in the service sector will no longer have recourse to reasonably well-paying jobs on an assembly line. Job requirements for higher levels of reading and math skills, independent thinking, and adaptability are, it is claimed, constantly increasing. Not only has the general demand for skills increased, the shift in the nature of the workplace itself will demand still higher skill levels. The evolving workplace will demand higher-order skills, "thinking skills—thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning" (SCANS 1991, p. 15). These skills will permit workers to be able to acquire and use information, work with changing technologies, better work with others in a "team" setting, and allocate and use resources productively in the "high performance workplace."

Although the schools may not be performing as well as we might desire, there are a number of questions about the nature and future of the skills gap and the relative roles of schools and businesses in closing the gap. In some areas, the problems of a skills gap has been more one of anecdote and anticipation than a documented shortage. For example, there is relatively little evidence that the schools are not producing the students with the ability to enter technical and scientific fields, especially those involving computers (Magaziner 1990, pp. 3ff.; Mishel and Teixeira 1991, pp. 98–103). Indeed, one study suggests that the only real labor shortages are in the health care field and for Roman Catholic priests, hardly the cutting edge of economic competitiveness (Grubb 1987).

More important, there is the more general issue of how "upscale" the future demand for skills will be. Again, surveys reveal business dissatisfaction with the skills of potential workers but evidence of a more general skills gap is mixed. Employers are often less concerned with specific job skills than with habits and attitudes such as punctuality and a willingness to take on responsibilities. Moreover, it is commonly noted that while the so-called "high-tech" fields are the most rapidly growing fields in percentage terms, the absolute number of jobs there is small compared to certain lower-status and skill-service categories. Projections of absolute job growth suggest that a "very large number of jobs will be created in medium to low skilled fields" such as marketing and sales (mostly cashiers) and service jobs including "cooks, nursing aides, waiters, and janitors" (Hudson Institute 1987, p. 99). Even so, it is difficult to project what the skill requirements of job categories like these will be. Much depends upon the way in which new technologies are deployed or the point in a cycle in which the use of a technology is either new or has become routinized (Flynn 1989; Kearsley 1989). Similarly, there is no obvious gap in terms of educational credentials, even granting that requirements for such credentials are increasing and probably will continue to do so. Educationally, at least, Americans are overqualified for their jobs. Currently, 70% of jobs require only a high school diploma or less, but half or more of young people attend college (National Governors' Association 1988, pp. vi., 3); by the year 2000, still "more than 70 percent of the jobs in America will not require a college education" (Magaziner 1990, p. 5). Overall, then, there is no clear and compelling skills gap, save for those individuals with few educational credentials who can no longer compete because less-skilled manufacturing jobs are disappearing.

Certainly the shift from manufacturing to services requires schools to improve levels of "basic" literacy and numeracy. Let us also suppose what is plausible, though not totally beyond question, that the workplace will be "upskilled" rather than "deskilled," such that there may be a gap between worker skills and job requirements. There still are questions concerning the relative roles of schools and businesses in closing these actual or potential gaps. First, it is typically noted that gains in productivity from on-the-job-training are twice those attributable to formal education. At the same time, various reports on the workforce note that businesses provide systematic training for, at most, only a third of the workforce, and that the vast majority of that training is concentrated in the professional and managerial ranks. Comparatively, American businesses invest in human capital at considerably lower rates than other nations (Carnevale and Gainer 1989; Magnum 1989; United States General Accounting Office 1990). Most of the recent reports recommend that businesses increase their investment in training, as well as suggesting tax credits to encourage them to do so. These decisions and policies about training, decisions that are important for productivity, are independent of what goes on in the public schools. Moreover, one would think that, given common perceptions of school performance, the impulse to invest in training would be even greater. However, there seems to be a "training gap" here, and the training that is provided is not directed at those who seem to need it most.

Besides training, there are questions about the ways in which the workforce is managed. Much is said in recent reports about the new workplace having flatter hierarchies with greater discretion for employees. The recent reports emphasize how workers must be critical thinkers who can adjust to inevitable and rapid changes on the job by making decisions and solving problems independently. However, it is also noted that most businesses are not organized to give their employees this kind of discretion or flexibility. Most businesses, perhaps 90% or more, have yet to create the organizational environments of the high performance workplace (Magaziner 1990, p. 3; SCANS 1991, p. viii.). That is, even if the schools were performing perfectly, business is currently not set up to develop or use those skills, however vaguely defined, vital to the modern competitive organization. Whether this is part of a vicious cycle in which business does not adjust because it lacks confidence in potential employees coming out of schools while schools remain unsure of what work requires is less important than the fact that changes in training and management must accompany school reform.

While schools have borne more than their share of criticism for our economic difficulties, the important issue here is not the relative distribution of blame for our economic woes. Rather, the point is that in treating schools as a kind of macroeconomic lever, whether in terms of overall performance indicators or quality of labor supply, we tend to downplay the importance of other factors more obviously related to economic performance that involve government and business decisions. We also deemphasize what are probably more important factors—training and workplace organization, and the deployment of technology—in enhancing productivity.

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Restructuring Students for Restructured Work: The Economy, School Reform, and Non-college-bound Youths

by Carol Axtell Ray and Roslyn Arlin Mickelson

Corporate leaders' perceptions of the renewed need for their involvement in educational reform were heightened by *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). Informants who are knowledgeable about the current school reform movement claim that the report "confirmed cocktail party fears" (Denis Doyle, interview, March 7, 1990), and "tapped into" pent-up business concerns (Chester Finn, interview, March 6, 1990) about public education. The report, which insisted that there are strong links between the economic decline of the United States and the allegedly weak public schools, was directed implicitly at business leaders.

At about the same time, President Reagan and Secretary of Education Bell spoke out strongly in favor of increased business support to education as a way to compensate for the decreased public financial support and cuts in federal spending for education. The federal share of expenses for elementary and secondary education dropped from 8.7 percent to 6.2 percent of the total expenditures for education from 1981 to 1989 (Clark and Asuto 1989), and the proportion of the U.S. federal budget for elementary and secondary education dropped from 2.5 percent to 1.8 percent during the Reagan years (Clark and Asuto 1989). Reagan charged that federal aid to education had failed and that businesses and the states should expand their leadership in education (Useem 1986).

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In 1985, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) issued an influential report, prepared mainly by business leaders, that asserted that the United States and its business community must no longer neglect children and that business programs directed toward poor children were necessary investments for a healthy economy and society. This report, in tandem with the shrinking federal outlays for public elementary and secondary education, marked the onset of corporate leaders' increased formal involvement in educational reform.

NEW WORKERS AND THE COMPETITIVENESS PROBLEM

Heralded by the popular press, a labor shortage moved into the forefront of corporate leaders' concerns in 1987 (Church 1987; "Help Wanted" 1987; Shapiro and Walsh 1987). This labor shortage has important implications for understanding corporate leaders' frustrations about the labor force. As was the case during the World War I years, relatively tight labor markets weaken organizational leaders' ability to manage and control employees effectively (Ramsey 1977; Ray 1989).

The reported low unemployment rate also made the national business community uncomfortable, particularly about the low-wage end of the jobs spectrum. Because of this labor shortage, company owners were forced to hire those who had been previously labeled unemployable. Their perception of the situation may be summarized as this: Not only is the product of the educational system defective, there is a shortage of it. The "demographic crunch" (Frederick Edelstein interview, March 7, 1990), moreover, is expected to worsen as the size of the 16–24-year-old cohort declines from nearly 23 percent of the population in 1978 to a projected 15–16 percent in 1995 (William T. Grant Foundation 1988b).

More recently, additional projections of the work force in the near future began to disturb the business community even further. The widely cited report by the Hudson Institute (1987) estimated that by 2000, 83 percent of the new work force will consist of minorities, women, and immigrants. This type of work force is regarded as a problem because of the "deprived backgrounds and low education levels that characterize a disproportionate number of these employees" (Kovach and Pearce 1990, p. 54). Moreover, another report noted, this is not the preferred labor pool of white men that businesses wish to hire (Houk 1989). Although the 83 percent figure was revealed recently as an editorial error—30 percent of the new work force in 2000 will be white men ("Business," 1990)—the 17 percent figure took on a life of its own, creating much consternation among corporate elites (see, e.g., E. Graham 1989; Teltsch 1988).

Virtually simultaneous with the discovery of a labor shortage, various accounts of the educational crisis increased the justifications for reforming the public schools, which gained momentum in mid-1987. Reports about education began to emphasize the "children at risk" (CED 1987). A careful reading of this material shows that a new perspective was gaining currency. It was not necessarily schools that needed to be restructured and reformed but *particular youngsters in them*, specifically white and minority working-class and low-income students who are most likely to drop out of school or who will have "flimsy" high school diplomas.

With the discovery of a labor shortage, various accounts of the educational crisis increased.

Hilgarten and Bosk (1988) suggested that two putative social problems sometimes become linked. In the case under discussion, the children at risk and a labor shortage were linked and, moreover, associated with public elementary and secondary education. As the report of the local task force we studied indicated, the blame for U.S. capitalists' weakness in world markets is placed increasingly on working-class and low-income students. These youths, it is claimed, later become undisciplined and unmotivated workers because their parents and the schools allegedly fail to socialize them to be disciplined and motivated.

It is within this context that Kearns and Doyle (1988) insisted that schools transmit three sets of values: democracy, citizenship, and the workplace. Honing in on the workplace, they specified the values of "punctuality, neatness, and civility." Furthermore, they claimed that education must shape and modify acceptable and appropriate social and academic behavior.

Kearns and Doyle are not the only observers who have accentuated the need for schools to concentrate more heavily on teaching values. Many other critics (e.g., Doyle 1989; Glazer 1990; Schneider 1990) of the public schools have emphasized the loss of traditional values among at-risk youngsters because of single-parent families, working mothers, poverty, and drug usage. Business writers, continuing to emphasize the allegedly inadequate parental socialization, have declared that schools must take over familylike roles to nurture the growing number of poor or troubled children and fill the gap left by working mothers (Erlich 1988; Perry 1988). Thus, because the "ideal family has disintegrated," the schools must instill values, goals, and discipline (Walters 1989). These expressions harken back to the 1910s, when a former superintendent of the Chicago schools asserted: "We must realize from the start that the moral reformation of the child is more important than the sharpening of his intellect" (quoted in Wrigley 1982, p. 66).

Corporate restructuring was used to justify decentralization of school district bureaucracies.

The new workplace arrangements supplied clues for new educational arrangements, as was the case in the Progressive Era when factory images, scientific management, and Taylorism were applied to the reform of the schools (Doyle 1987; Fischer and Mandell 1988; Tyack 1990). The strong socialization aspects of corporate culture and the organizational restructuring of schools were pronounced school-reform themes by the onset of the 1990s.

Corporate restructuring was one model used to justify the reduction and decentralization of school district bureaucracies. The school reform agendas that call for clearly defined values in individual schools are reminiscent of the corporate-culture model. Both are captured nicely, for example, in Chubb and Moe's (1990) controversial prescriptions for school reform, although John E. Chubb, of the Brookings Institution, dismissed the influence of this model in an interview on March 6, 1990.

The competitiveness problem, federal cuts in spending on education, and the Reagan administration's calls for corporate activism in public education both garnered and legitimated corporate leaders' interest in educational reform. The projected labor shortage, combined with the disciplinary and motivational problems associated with "kids at risk," converged to form further compelling justifications for the business community's intervention into discussions of school reform.

THE HIGH-TECH SOCIETY

In addition to the current accepted wisdom that U.S. schools must create better educated workers so corporations can compete effectively in global markets, many argue that such workers are necessary to match the rapidly growing number of new high-tech jobs (e.g., Cavazos 1989; Dole 1989; Doyle 1987; Shapiro and Walsh 1987). The alleged mismatch is asserted to be yet another reason for the weak competitive performance of U.S. firms. Variations of this theme flourish in the popular, business, and academic press.

The theme implies the widespread availability and expansion of sophisticated, complex jobs requiring a solid academic background. Mainstream social scientists, for instance, assert that "as technical sophistication and the complexity of tasks steadily increase, the educational requirements of the economy should expand" (Hage, Garnier, and Fuller 1988, p. 826). Critical social scientists added: "New attempts are needed to upgrade schools in ways that can better match jobs and potential employees . . . mass education fails to prepare [students] for life in the information age" (Eitzen and Baca Zinn 1988, p. 24).

Although most business leaders, policy analysts, social scientists, and educators seem to accept that technological innovation is pervasive and usually requires new and more sophisticated skills from wage earners, there is no consensus on this issue. Rather, there is a heated academic debate over whether new workers are underskilled and undereducated and whether higher skill levels are necessary for current and future jobs. Bailey (1991) observed, however, that it is difficult and expensive to capture the characteristics of work and skills in large data sets.

The contrasting views in the debate fall roughly into two camps. The first camp claims that the work force is underskilled at the middle- and lower-level positions and that high-skill jobs are expanding (Bailey 1991). *Business Week* ("Help Wanted" 1987) reported, for example, that Motorola now has a production method that uses complex mathematical guides to manage quality. This work is currently done by engineers, but the company wants to "save money" by having blue-collar workers do part of it. Thus, the latter need "proved" math skills.

This kind of "upskilling," which attempts to save money by eliminating high-priced employees will increase as a method of improving competitiveness, productivity, and profits (Attewell 1987; Kraut 1987). Although it has been argued that this trend may narrow the economic gap between some high- and low-wage employees (Kraut 1987), there is no evidence that it will open opportunity structures or raise wages for the lower-wage incumbents.

Among business people surveyed, five percent said that educational and skill requirements are increasing in the workplace.

The second camp in the debate holds that the work force is overeducated, particularly at the middle and lower levels, and that emerging job opportunities will require less educated workers (Blackburn, Bloom, and Freeman 1991; Rumberger and Levin 1989). Spenner (1988; cf. Burke and Rumberger 1987) found little evidence to support the contention that many forms of technological change require more sophisticated education or workers. Moreover, some authors (Burke and Rumberger 1987; Ewen 1990) have suggested that the proliferation of high-tech industries is more likely to reduce the skill requirements of jobs, rather than upgrade them.

In support of this thesis, among the business people surveyed for the report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Work Force (1990), just five percent said that educational and skill requirements are increasing in the workplace. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the report stated that approximately one-third of the jobs require an eighth-grade education, one-third require a tenth-grade education and some additional training, and one-third require four or more years of college (pp. 26–27).

Similarly, Reich (1991), eschewing the usual occupational categories, identified three major categories of jobs. The jobs in the first category, "routine production services," which include heavy industry but also many information-processing jobs, were held by about one-quarter of the American work force in 1990. These workers' educational requirements are basic literacy and the ability to perform simple computations, but their "cardinal virtues are reliability, loyalty, and the capacity to take direction" (Reich 1991, p. 175). The second category, "in-person services," which accounted for 30 percent of the jobs in 1990, is growing the most rapidly. Its incumbents need "at most" a high school diploma and some vocational training. The third major category is "symbolic-analytic services," which require at least four years of college and accounted for 20 percent of the American jobs in 1990.

Predictions about the quantity of new high-tech jobs vary. The estimate of John Clendenin, chief executive officer of Bell South, is the most optimistic and reflects the pervasive belief in the opportunities of a postindustrial society: In the next few years "there will be 10 million information age jobs" (quoted in the "Business Roundtable Report," 1988, p. 1). A Bureau of Labor Statistics report (Fischer and Mandell 1988), however, showed that although 23.4 to 28.6 million new jobs will have been created between 1982 and 1995, only 1 million to 4.6 million will be in high-tech industries, which is not the same as saying that they will be high-tech jobs.

The economy is generating nine new cashiering jobs for every computer programming job.

Business Week ("Help Wanted," 1987) estimated that from 1986 to 2000 the largest number of new jobs (6,194,000) (in order) will be for retail salespersons, waitresses-waiters, nurses, janitors, general managers, cashiers, truck drivers, office clerks, food counter workers, and nurses' aides. The fastest-growing jobs from 1986 to 2000 will be as a medical assistants, physical therapists, physical therapist aides, repairers of data-processing equipment, home health aides, systems analysts, medical records technicians, employment interviewers, and computer programmers. Yet they will account for only 1,112,000 new jobs ("Help Wanted" 1987; cf. Fischer and Mandell 1988).

Although some of these jobs require solid training beyond high school and some may be considered high tech, a far larger proportion do not fit these descriptions. Fiske (1988) pointed out, for instance, that the economy is generating nine new cashiering jobs for every computer programming job. Bailey (1991) noted that the usefulness of occupational forecasting for guiding educational reform is severely limited.

In general, business leaders' demands for a better-educated work force to match the high-tech information age do not take into account whether businesses really require such workers or how many they will actually need. Moreover, it does not follow that merely because a new technology is sophisticated, the education that workers need to interact with the technology must necessarily be more advanced. In other words, changes in skills may occur, but levels of skills may not increase (Rumberger 1989). Finally, contemporary upskilling (to the extent that it exists) is too often accompanied by decreased wages (Noyelle 1987).

CORPORATE DESTRUCTURING

The broad and heavy emphasis on the pervasiveness of *technological* innovation both obscures and neglects the *social* innovation undertaken by corporate elites in the form of the externalization of work (sending work formerly done in the firm to outside contractors) and workers from core firms and the accompanying social and economic consequences. Although corporate restructuring seems to be organizational innovation involving the shifting, adjusting, "flexibilizing," and externalizing of functions or roles, these roles are occupied by people. Thus corporate restructuring must be understood as a social innovation. It is to this social innovation that we now turn.

Many of the new jobs created since 1980 are in the small-business sector of the economy, are easily constructed as contingent jobs, and feature short or nonexistent career ladders. Rather than corporate restructuring, we suggest that *destructuring* is a more appropriate term because organizational leaders frequently reform their companies as much smaller versions of their previous structures.

The massive growth of the small-business sector in the 1980s is partly the result of the externalization of work. The destructuring of core firms pushed jobs and therefore workers out of companies. Birch (1988), the premier analyst of the growth of small businesses, reported that 17 million new jobs were created from 1980 to 1987, mainly in non-Fortune 500 companies, most of which were in the small-business sector or the competitive or peripheral labor market sector. Nasar (1990) noted more specifically that 15 million jobs were created in small businesses in the 1980s. In 1988, companies with fewer than 20 employees generated 35 percent of all new jobs in the United States even though such firms employed less than 19 percent of all workers (Associated Press 1988).

The small-business sector, which Birch (1988, p. 23) termed the "hidden economy," has absorbed "thousands of the victims of restructuring." "The hardships for those who must move and change careers, many times at a loss of pay, is real and growing," Birch (p. 23) admitted. Small businesses are typically characterized by low wages, instability, or "volatility" and lack opportunities for training and upward mobility. Pfeffer and Baron (1988; cf. Birch 1988) added that these businesses provide few benefits and are likely to perish. Just as important, jobs in small businesses are frequently part time or temporary—contingent.

The Functions of Contingent Workers

Temporary and part-time workers have long been a part of the U.S. workplace, and their numbers usually increase during economic downturns and contract once the crisis passes. Following the 1981-82 recession, however, their numbers increased (Worsnip 1987). In 1985, Audrey Freeman of the business advisory organization the Conference Board, coined the phrase "contingent employment arrangements" (Polivka and Nardone 1989). Whether part-time temporary, part-time permanent, or full-time temporary, the key distinction between contingent workers and core workers is that contingent workers do not work full time (referring to hours per week) or year round (referring to weeks per year). Estimates of the number of individuals in "flexible" or contingent jobs vary widely. Probably the most accurate estimate is Belous's (1989) broad one: 28 to 35 percent of all workers in the United States.

A contingent work force is necessary, its advocates argue, to keep the economy competitive (Worsnip 1987), and the increase in the number of these workers is frequently an aspect of corporate restructuring. Employers also use contingent workers as buffers against market fluctuations (Harrison and Bluestone 1988). Numerical and temporal flexibility fashion "just-in-time" workers who often labor for the numerous temporary-help services that have flourished since 1980 (Pfeffer and Baron 1988).

Contingent or "disposable" workers save employers the cost of benefits, pension plans, wages, and the expenses associated with internal job ladders. Moreover, these workers are vivid examples to core employees of the work life they may confront if they do not labor in a motivated, disciplined fashion (Littler and Salaman 1982). Contingent workers also give employers the kind of economic leeway that is necessary to continue to offer handsome benefits to the core employees whom they wish to retain and help insulate the former from layoffs (Osterman 1988). Finally, contingent work minimizes the possibilities of the formation and activism of unions because the workplace and work teams are constantly in a state of flux.

Citing hourly or weekly wages is no longer appropriate because neither of those temporal dimensions translate into annual income. Harrison and Bluestone (1988) pointed out that half the full-time year-round jobs created since 1980 pay less than $11,000 a year and that 80 percent of the contingent workers earn less than that amount. Belous (cited in Davidson 1989) observed that 52 percent of the new jobs created since 1980 have been contingent. Taken together, these figures mean that 65 percent of the approximately 17 million new jobs created from 1980 to 1988 pay less than $11,000 a year. The problem, especially for young workers, then, is not the loss of jobs per se, but the loss of wages (Ehrenreich 1989) because of the low wages and instability of the new jobs that are available. The enhanced flexibility for employers through restructuring and contingent work arrangements has generated increased poverty for workers (Blank 1991; Moeller 1989).[1]

Non-college-bound students do make the connection between a high school diploma and job opportunities.

As has been noted, during the past several years the jobs to which non-college-bound youths have had access have undergone rapid and fundamental changes. Not only have millions of industrial jobs been replaced by low-mobility, low-paying jobs in the volatile small-business sector, but the expansion of contingent jobs in all sectors of the economy has contributed to destructured, unstable labor markets. The restructuring of companies has consequences, however, that the fashioners of restructuring did not foresee.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF RESTRUCTURED WORK

Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole (1989) argued that high school students must be taught to make the connection between staying in school and their future job possibilities and that there is a "motivation gap" among students. Dole and others, however, do not take into account the possibility that non-college-bound students *do* make the connection between a high school diploma and job opportunities and what they frequently observe fails to encourage them to be disciplined or motivated in school or at work.

Undisciplined, Unmotivated Students

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) maintained that the constitution of the job market produces functional illiteracy to a large extent. Non-college-bound youths' perceptions of the opportunity structures that await them form the intersection of school failures and restructured work (Bishop 1989). Research (Bickel 1989; MacLeod 1987; Mickelson 1990) suggested that the perceptions of their occupational life chances shape the academic orientations and activities of adolescents from a wide variety of race and class backgrounds. Today, non-college-bound youths believe realistically that as adults, they will face jobs that are unstable; lack opportunities for advancement; pay low annual wages; and provide few, if any, health benefits.

These students' observations of the wages they will receive are correct. The annual earnings of high school graduates aged 20–24 fell from $15,221 to $10,924 from 1973 to 1986 (William T. Grant Foundation 1988b) and those of 30-year-old high school graduates fell by 30 percent to $17,300 from 1973 to 1985 (Shapiro and Walsh 1987). Decreasing and uncertain wages are a signal to youths that the business community does not value a high school diploma. Adolescents tend to assign as little value to the kinds of jobs available with a high school diploma as does the rest of society (Borman 1991; Liebow 1967; Ogbu 1988; Wilson 1988), and new workers view the available jobs as both menial and meaningless (Duster 1987).

Thus, numerous indicators suggest that both schooling and markets have lost their credibility as fair mechanisms for distributing opportunities (Shapiro 1990). Non-college-bound high school students, although repeatedly taught that the key to good jobs and upward mobility is to do well in high school, are increasingly unable to see—in the world around them—success stories in the lives of their neighbors, peers, and kin who are high school graduates (MacLeod 1987; Mickelson 1990; Shanker 1990; William T. Grant Foundation 1988a).

One result is that both the low-income white youths whom MacLeod (1987) studied and the offspring of downwardly mobile corporate managers whom Newman (1989) interviewed resisted the "achievement ideology" or "meritocratic individualism" because to embrace it meant that they would have to think of their parents as stupid and lazy (MacLeod 1987) or weak and unambitious (Newman 1989). Thus, the dearth of secure jobs with decent pay, stability, and opportunities partially debunks the ideology and rhetoric that education will lead to good jobs (Mickelson 1990; Willis 1977).

The target population that most adults would like to remain in school and perform well is least likely to do so because its members do not believe a high school education will lead to decent jobs or opportunities, or they think that the available jobs are too low paying and unstable to make diligent educational efforts worthwhile (cf. Berman 1989).

The current "education deficit" and "motivation gap" emanate from sources beyond unsatisfactory schools or inadequate parents.

DISCUSSION

Non-college-bound youths must be viewed as active agents in their social processes; they experience and make sense of their worlds. High school students, as Shor put (1986) it, read reality with more care than they read textbooks. Part of their world is the realm of work, not only because many high school students hold jobs and observe high school graduates in those jobs, but because they observe their adult kin grappling with the financial difficulties fostered by restructuring and the decreased wages of many kinds of jobs. Work is rarely considered an agent of socialization or in the same category as family, education, religion, or the mass media. Yet the fundamental and rapid transformations of work opportunities are clearly a part of the socialization process of adolescents.

We contend that the current "education deficit" (Cavazos 1989) and "motivation gap" (Dole 1989) emanate from sources beyond putatively unsatisfactory public schools or allegedly inadequate parents. The emphasis on presumably weak, often low-income families (Jeanne Allen, Heritage Foundation, interview, March 9, 1990; Glazer 1990; Schneider 1990; Wynne 1990) or allegedly weak schools—both formulated as faulty socialization—fails to explain adequately the deficits in motivation and discipline of U.S. high school students and new workers who do not go to college.

We have tried to show that other sources, slimmed-down companies, for example, have significant effects on educational motivation and discipline by increasingly polarizing the economy (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985), thereby decreasing annual wages and the rewards of a high school diploma (Bishop 1989). The current economic crisis (following Aronowitz and Giroux 1985) was not caused by education, but has had significant effects on the educational processes and outcomes of non-college-bound students. Therefore, we propose the following alternative to the usual formulations of the problems with U.S. public schools: A lack of economic opportunities to non-college-bound youngsters shapes their performance in high school; fosters their early school leaving; and is associated with a host of related tendencies, including weak discipline and motivation both at school and at work. Employers are not apt to find highly disciplined and motivated young employees for jobs that are unstable and low paying. Solely restructuring schools and students without attending to the contradictions generated by a restructured crisis-prone economy are unlikely to solve U.S. business leaders' problems with global competitiveness.

NOTE

1. Belous (cited in Kan 1989) observed that there are twice as many female and minority contingent workers as white male contingent workers. The effects of low wages, no benefits, and the lack of opportunity and how these factors intersect with schooling by race, ethnicity, and gender deserve analysis.

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Despite Touted Gifts, Business Tax Breaks Cost Schools Money

by William Celis III

Many American companies in recent years have made a crusade of trying to rescue the nation's deteriorating public schools, casting themselves as white knights whose donations help the cause.

But at the same time, many of these companies are extracting as many sizable tax breaks as they can from their communities, cutting off money needed to finance public education.

Now educators are fighting back, trying to make businesses pay their full share of taxes. In Washington State, corporate loopholes were a major issue, along with pay increases and benefits, in a statewide teachers' strike this spring. In Kansas, Texas, Minnesota, Ohio, and other states, legislation and lawsuits are being used to try to eliminate corporate tax exemptions.

"Companies are caught in a contradictory situation," said Michael W. Apple, an education professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison who wrote several books on the financing of public education. "They want more spent on education but prefer that it not come out of their own pockets."

Tax exemptions take many forms, but the most common concession reduces or eliminates property taxes for long periods, and in most areas the bulk of property tax revenue goes to support public schools. Such concessions must end, educators say, not only because the recession is squeezing public budgets, but also because the extra revenue is needed to pay for the many improvements mandated by school reform legislation. Such measures are often backed by businesses.

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But many municipalities say that ending corporate tax exemptions will provoke businesses to relocate, leaving the public treasuries even poorer.

For their part, businesses defend the exemptions as necessary for many reasons, including remaining competitive with foreign firms. "It would be ridiculous to expect companies not to negotiate for exemptions," said William H. Kolberg, president of the National Alliance of Business. "Economic development has always been a quid pro quo. Cities want these developments."

Businesses defend their exemptions as necessary to remain competitive.

While there are no reliable national statistics on corporate contributions to public schools or corporate tax breaks, a survey of several school systems and states suggests that educators may have a point.

—In Corpus Christi, Texas, the local school system estimated it received $250,000 in the last school year from local companies in money, equipment, and donated time from employees, but said it also lost $900,000 in tax revenue for the district because of exemptions.

—The Wichita, Kansas, public schools said local businesses this school year contributed $1.1 million in a variety of areas. But the district also said that businesses did not pay $1.6 million in school taxes because of concessions.

—In Florida, $32 million has been given to public education this school year, the state Department of Education said. But that amount is dwarfed by roughly $500 million in tax concessions this year, including breaks on sales taxes, machinery, and fuel costs, according to an analysis by the state Department of Revenue.

This issue has so concerned the National Governors' Association that it plans an October meeting on the matter, and the National Association of School Boards two months ago formed a committee to investigate the effects of corporate exemptions on public school finances.

For their part, businesses defend their exemptions as necessary to remain competitive, and maintain that their contributions are helpful to the national effort to improve schools.

But some educators contend that such contributions are usually targeted for a specific program and are not entirely altruistic.

"They can turn contributions off and on and use it to leverage things they want done," said Chris Pipho, director of state relations for the Education Commission of the States, a Denver research and policy organization.

Although tax breaks are not new, their use has drastically grown over the last two decades, as more states, counties, and cities compete for businesses. They assemble packages that include the elimination or reduction of sales or property taxes or both, exemptions on new equipment, tax breaks for training new employees, and reductions on taxes for school improvements. Some states, like Florida, even award companies tax breaks for fuel use.

"Companies are saying, 'Look, this is a competition we basically didn't create,'" said Jay Kayne, director of policy studies for the National Governors' Association. "In a sense they are right."

Educators need a strong revenue base to pay for things like improved academic programs, building new schools, or replacing aging buildings.

Nonetheless, educators assert that if they are to be held more accountable for school performance, then they need a stronger revenue base to pay for things like improved academic programs, building new schools, or replacing aging buildings. A lawsuit filed in January by the Cleveland Public Schools helps illustrate the growing national debate.

The complaint filed in state court maintains that the Cleveland Public Schools system, currently facing a $34 million deficit for the 1991–92 school year, has been significantly hurt by the tax breaks granted to businesses and others in the name of economic development.

In one example cited by Timothy J. Armstrong, a Cleveland lawyer representing the school system, the city's new Society Center, a multiuse development that includes a hotel and a bank, would pay a 2.1 percent tax rate, or $8 million, on the development's $400 million value. But Mr. Armstrong said the entire $8 million in tax proceeds was abated, or eliminated, by the city as an incentive for the developer. Of that $8 million, 60 percent would have gone to the school system, he said.

"Our City Council hasn't seen a tax abatement that it didn't like," said Mr. Armstrong, adding that school systems in the state are routinely excluded from participating in city or county decisions on tax exemptions for economic development.

But the city responded that the abatement was necessary to get the hotel built. Cleveland does not have enough hotels for conventions, a shortage that has caused the city to lose several gatherings in the past, said Craig S. Miller, the city's law director. He said the shrinking pool of Federal money for city development projects had forced a heavier reliance by Cleveland, as well as other cities, on tax concessions to prod development.

The issue of corporate exemptions reached such a boil two months ago in Washington State that teachers included a protest against corporate tax breaks in the list of grievances when they walked off their jobs.

Legislation proposed by the Washington Education Association, the teachers' union, and Washington Citizen Action, a citizens' consumer group, would end several business exemptions and would raise more than $700 million over two years for education spending.

"Businesses are demanding everything from the system, but they are not willing to put anything back in," said Karin Goodro, a fifth-grade teacher in Tacoma who walked off her job.

The Boeing Company took the brunt of the criticism because it is the state's largest employer and because of the tax concessions it receives. Although the company has said that it does not maintain records on the extent of its sales tax exemption, the Washington Citizen Action group analyzed state Department of Revenue records filed by the company and asserted that in the 1989–1991 period the company was exempted from more than $900 million in sales taxes on its products, including commercial and military aircraft.

Boeing defended its contributions and exemptions and contended that, without accountability in school performance, real improvements would remain elusive.

"First, they say, 'Give us more money,'" said Forrest Coffey, corporate vice president for government affairs at Boeing. "Why should I give you more money? What do I get?"

One reason business has come under increasing scrutiny over exemptions is their vocal criticism of schools and their public displays of gift-giving to schools that have soured some educators. Last year, Minnesota closed a loophole through which potential school funds were drained.

Under a widely used state development program, cities were luring companies into blighted areas with low-interest bonds. But the resulting increase in property values and taxes paid only went to pay off the bonds, with no funds going to help schools. In 1988, the last year for which statistics are available, $60 million in potential school funds was lost, said State Representative Ann H. Rest, who successfully sponsored legislation forcing the cities to reimburse school systems for revenue lost as a result of the practice.

"There is a myth that has been perpetuated, and it's a fallout from the Reagan Administration," said Thomas A. Shannon, executive director of the National Association of School Boards. "And that is: 'You can't fix education by throwing money at it.' It's a crock."

Section 2

Teaching vs. Selling: Corporatons in the Classroom

Let's connect the dots: over here (as William Celis reported in the preceding section) are corporations persuading public officials to reduce their tax obligations; over there (as Melanie Wells reports in the first article of this section) are schools so desperate for resources that they must resort to selling advertising space to companies. Lower taxes *and* a new captive audience for their ads—this must be what corporations mean by a "win-win" situation.

Many schools have been unable to resist the offer of free televisions in exchange for making their students watch Channel One, a brief current-events program larded with commercials. This was the brainchild of Chris Whittle, a man whose expertise is not in education but in delivering potential consumers to advertisers. This particular project, where the potential consumers happen to be our children, has excited considerable objection.[1] But it isn't just the idea itself that ought to concern us: it's findings, such as those by Bradley S. Greenberg and Jeffrey E. Brand, indicating that those commercials are having the intended effect.

Long before anyone dreamed of Nikes, much less Nike commercials in the classrooms, corporations were already trying to sneak their wares into school. Back in the 1950s, Paul Goodman discovered that some students in New York were being assigned something called *The Educational ABC's of Industry*. He reported that "the class was actually required, by a teacher distracted by overwork, to copy out jingles in which C stands for Orange-*Crush*, 'taste it and see,' and F for the *Ford* Motor Company, 'where the first car grew.'"[2]

In the late 1970s, Sheila Harty filled nearly 200 pages with examples of this sort of thing.[3] And Alex Molnar, in an excerpt from his new book *Giving Kids the Business*, provides still more examples of such corporate propaganda being passed off to teachers—and, what is more depressing, used by teachers—as curricular materials. Indeed, I have on my desk a large, colorful ad aimed at educators touting several free "school programs" helpfully supplied by Procter & Gamble. One kit helps fifth graders learn about personal hygiene by way of Old Spice aftershave and Secret deodorant; another promises a seventh-grade lesson on the "ten steps to self-esteem," complete with teacher's guide, video, and samples of Clearasil.

Some of us find this "commercial assault on schoolchildren"[4] appalling on its face, so to speak. But it's even more disturbing to reflect on the ways that corporate sponsorship is likely to affect what is included—and, equally important, what is not included—in these lessons. How likely is it that the makers of Clearasil would emphasize that how you feel about yourself should not be affected by how you look? Or consider a hypothetical unit on nutrition underwritten by Kraft-General Foods (or by McDonalds or Coca-Cola): would you expect there to be any mention of the fact that the food you prepare yourself is likely to be more nutritious than processed products in boxes and jars and cans? Or that the best way to quench your thirst is actually to drink water? Or that a well-balanced diet requires little or no meat? Or that smoking causes cancer? (Kraft-General Foods, you see, is owned by the Philip Morris tobacco company.) No wonder John Olson, in his contribution to this section, suggests that the proper way to use corporate materials in the classroom is as examples of how propaganda works.

There are many ways, beyond the use of commercials posing as lessons, by which corporations see schools as opportunities to make a fast buck. Mary B. W. Tabor, for example, describes how a growing number of investors are coming to regard education as a veritable gold mine. And finally, in an eye-opening essay, Douglas D. Noble applies the age-old Latin question "Cui bono?" (Who benefits?) to the relatively new field of computers. You may never again look at that row of Macs or IBMs in exactly the same way.

NOTES

1. For example, see the special section on Channel One in the February 1995 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*.

2. Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (NY: Vintage, 1960), p. 118.

3. Sheila Harty, *Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Study of Responsive Law, 1979).

4. George R. Kaplan, "Profits R Us: Notes on the Commercialization of America's Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1996, p. K5.

Ad Pitches Target Teen Consumers

by Melanie Wells

At 6:30 a.m., Ginoa Mercer gets her first taste of advertising: a Burger King logo affixed to the yellow school bus that takes the 15-year-old cheerleader to Palmer High School in Colorado Springs.

Once there, Mercer and her classmates walk a hallway festooned with advertising banners from Mountain Dew (emblazoned with a "Dew the Springs!" promotion), Marriott Food Services ("Welcome back to food, books, and school") and local retailer Surplus City (which urges kids to use their student discount cards to buy clothing and gear). In a nearby break room, a Frito-Lay display invites students to "Enter the Crunch Zone!" Nearby, branded refrigerators and vending machines sell Snapple and Pepsi.

Across town, students waiting for classes at Widefield High School watch Channel One. That's the ad-supported new program that K-III Communications feeds 12,000 of the nation's 110,000 schools—an audience of 8.1 million kids—for 12 minutes each day.

Among marketers paying $185,000 per 30-second spot: Pepsi-Cola, M&M/Mars, Procter & Gamble, Reebok, and Nintendo.

Increasingly, high schools are looking more like Madison Avenue High, as marketers buy access to students with advertising and equipment ranging from athletic shoes to computers. It's a symbiotic quest. Many school districts, hurt by declining tax bases and rising costs, need supplemental funds to help pay for everything from basic equipment to extracurricular activities. And marketers want to put their soft drinks, burgers, and acne medication in the hands of teens—a $100 billion annual market.

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Marketers also hope their in-school ads will influence parents' purchasing decisions, since experts say pre-teens and teens are assuming a larger role in family buying decisions.

Marketers hope their in-school ads will influence parents' purchasing decisions.

"Teens represent incredible buying power, and school is a huge part of their life. It's a great place to reach them," says Peter Zollo, president of the marketing research firm Teenage Research Unlimited.

Some students like Mercer say they don't notice the ads. But many media-savvy students do. "I'd like to see more advertising," says Widefield High's Nicholas McIntyre, 16, who watches Channel One weekday mornings. "It's interesting to see how companies want us to see their business."

Classmate LaShonda Duncan says she remembers hearing on Channel One a catchy Taco Bell jingle that she hummed all day. That's music to the ears of every marketer who wants teen-age consumers.

"Those of us who can reach consumers at such an early age can influence what they'll drink when they're older," says Gary Rollins, spokesman for Dr Pepper/Cadbury North America.

A Dr Pepper bottler pays three large suburban Dallas high schools in the Irving school district almost $100,000 a year for a seven-year vending and signage contract. A $215,000 payment up-front helped the schools build new activity centers that, of course, feature Dr Pepper signage. Additionally, the schools get to keep 40% of what the 5,000-plus students at the three schools spend on soft drinks from vending machines.

"It's a business deal. It's good for us, and it's good for them," says Don Poe, athletic director for the Irving school district.

To critics of in-school commercialism, this cozy comingling is tantamount to fingernails scraping a chalkboard. They argue that advertising shouldn't coexist with lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

"Kids are seen as a market to be exploited, and school systems, starved for money, are being forced to sell out their students for advertising dollars," says Michael Jacobson, head of the Center for the Study of Commercialism, a consumer advocacy group. "When a company gets onto school property, its also getting an endorsement by the school for its products and services, and that's not what schools should do."

But school administrators downplay concerns that they're selling their scholastic souls to help marketers pander to kids.

"Schools are searching for anything that won't require them to cut (expenses)," says Jay Butler, spokesman for the National School Boards Association.

While hitching a marketer's moniker to a football stadium is nothing new, many new deals go way beyond a Coca-Cola sign on the scoreboard:

School administrators downplay concerns that they're selling their scholatic souls to help marketers.

- Nike supplies a girls' high school basketball team in Beaverton, Oregon, with sneakers, warm-up gear and equipment bags. Rival Reebok supplies several high school boys' teams, including perennial basketball powerhouse DeMatha High of Hyattsville, Maryland.

  And both Nike and Reebok are banking on athletes' roles as campus trendsetters whose apparel can influence peers. "You can talk about Emmitt Smith and Shaquille O'Neal as influencers, but the top athletes at a high school obviously have influence over the student body," Reebok spokesman Dave Fogelson says.
- Taco Bell provides food to about 3,000 school cafeterias. Schools typically pay the fast-food giant a fee, then keep money made from selling its burritos and tacos.

  "It's a great way for us to expand our brand," Taco Bell spokesman Jonathan Blum says.
- Tech-company efforts to reach students are more subtle. AT&T will spend $150 million over five years providing Internet access to schools that request it.

Some computer companies, such as Apple Computer, participate in grocery-store sponsored programs that let schools purchase equipment with grocery receipts. Apple hopes kids will stick with its products as they move into the business world, says Apple spokesman Garry Rosenblum.

The Colorado Springs school district's marketing program rolled out an aggressive school bus ad program in 1994 to supplement its $146 million annual operating budget. The district now collects $113,000 annually from ads on school buses and in school hallways by Pepsi-Cola, Burger King, 7-UP, the American Cancer Society, and local retailers. School bus ad messages cost $3,000.

"We don't see this as a way to balance the budget, but it has helped us to do some little things for the schools," district Superintendent Ken Burnley says. The district recently hired a local firm, DD Marketing, to boost the district's ad revenue to $500,000 a year.

The New York City Board of Education, the latest school district to solicit advertising, hopes to raise $25 million over five years selling ad space on 3,000 school buses. "There's dire need for additional funds," says Lou Benevento, director of financial operations for the board.

Fearing complaints from parents, educators are trying to make commerce palatable to the public. The New York City Board of Education hopes to thwart criticism by keeping school bus ads G-rated—meaning no Joe Camel and no waiflike, underwear-clad Calvin Klein models. Benevento says advertisers also will be required to link logos with educational messages, such as "Stay in School."

Peninsula School District near Tacoma, Washington, plans to include marketing-class students in its school bus ad program. Students may help peddle ad space and design corporate messages. "It'd be a real-life experience," district spokeswoman Marcia Harris says.

So far, parents don't appear to mind. Colorado Springs' school district has received no complaints about its aggressive ad program.

"It's good for the schools because it gives them money. They need the money," says Michael Richards, whose daughter attends a Manhattan elementary school.

Some marketers, however, are still experimenting with their high school ad efforts, worried about coming on too strong.

"There's a fine line between capitalizing on an opportunity and infuriating parents," Taco Bell's Blum says.

Channel One: But What about the Advertising?

by Bradley S. Greenberg and Jeffrey E. Brand

Some [examinations of the] benefits and drawbacks of Channel One [have] focused exclusively on what students learned from the program's ten-minute daily diet of news [rather than on] what students may be learning from the controversial two-minute daily diet of commercials.

Critics claim that it is improper, and perhaps illegal, to "sell" school time to commercial outlets. How can we justify taking time out of the school day (or adding time) to sell products in a mandatory student viewing session, even when accompanied by a slick news program and a bonanza of free telecommunication equipment for the school (Graves 1990, Tate 1989)? Yet, that is exactly what is happening in thousands of senior high schools and increasing numbers of junior high schools, with the likely prospect that Whittle Communications will design and market a parallel offering for elementary schools.

Questions about the advertising remain at the core of parent and school concerns. Does the advertising make a difference in student attitudes toward the products advertised? How do the students respond to a persistent, daily diet of advertising in their classrooms? We sought answers to these questions in a research project that we conducted in Michigan schools.

Our research surveyed viewers and nonviewers of Channel One in two pairs of high schools matched on income, racial composition, state testing scores, per-pupil expenditures, population density, and student-teacher ratios (Greenberg and Brand 1993). We tested students—373 in Channel One schools and 454 in control schools—twice on news knowledge and once on advertising issues.

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Our news test results were generally consistent with the results summarized by Tiene (1993): Viewing students learned about news issues presented on Channel One and thus were better informed about those public issues than nonviewers. This carried over marginally to their news learning outside of the Channel One context, but not at all in terms of any expressed greater interest in news in general.

Channel One viewers thought more highly of products advertised than nonviewers did.

In order to test the effects of advertising on students, we logged all the products that were advertised on Channel One for four weeks prior to the first wave of our testing in the schools. Of the sixteen different products advertised, we asked questions about the five most frequently advertised.

Specific products, We asked students to evaluate each of the products using a seven-point, agree-disagree scale in the following manner: "Of all the chips available, XX chips are the best." We summed the average evaluation scores separately for the viewing and nonviewing students and found that for each product evaluated—chips, a beverage, sneakers, and two candies—the average score for the viewing students was higher than for the nonviewers. When we calculated across the individual products, we found that Channel One viewers thought more highly of products advertised on the program than nonviewers did.

Our second test was more stringent in that the students were not prompted with product names. They were given eight product categories—gum, juice, burgers, candy, mints, sneakers, cough drops, and pop—and were asked to identify the brand they most likely would purchase. Our survey showed that viewers of Channel One are more likely to say they would purchase products advertised on the program than nonviewers. For two products—sneakers and mints—there was a 9 percent difference between the two groups, and overall there was an average 4 percent difference in the likelihood that students would intend to purchase the products advertised. Overall, viewers cited more brands that were advertised on the program than nonviewers did, and they indicated stronger intentions to purchase brands advertised on the program.

Next, each student indicated whether or not he or she had "recently" purchased any of twelve products that had been advertised

Figure 1
Student Responses to “Materialism” Scale Items

Item:	Viewers	Nonviewers	Probability
1. Money isn't everything.*	4.0	.7	<.06
2. Having a nice car is important but school is more important.*	2.5	.3	<.10
3. I don't care whether my clothes have a designer label on them.*	4.3	.0	<.04
4. When I watch commericals, I usually want what is being shown.	3.0	2.8	<.05
5. Most people who have a lot of money are happier than most people who have only a little money.	3.5	3.3	ns
Average Materialism Score:	17.3	16.0	<.002

*Items were scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Starred items were recorded so that a higher score on each item and on the overall index reflects more materialistic attitudes. Thus, you could read item 2 as “Money is everything.

on Channel One. There was no difference between the viewing and nonviewing groups in terms of recent purchases.

Materialism. The final measure of responses was tied less specifically to products and more generally to whether ads enhanced the students' propensity to “want” things. Because research by Liebert (1986) and Moschis and Moore (1982) has documented that television advertising influenced the materialistic values of young people, we postulated that the special circumstances of in-school viewing of commercials could heighten and extend those values. We asked five questions of the students (see fig. 1) and found that students who watched Channel One regularly were more likely to agree that:

- money is everything;
- a nice car is more important than school;
- designer labels make a difference;
- I want what I see advertised; and
- wealthy people are happier than the poor.

Summing across all five items, we found a very strong statistical difference, suggesting that regular watching of Channel One reinforces materialistic attitudes. This conclusion is limited only by the fact that we were unable to ask these questions of the students before they began to watch Channel One, and they may have had different attitudes about the value of material items before they started viewing the program.

The in-school showing offers an implicit endorsement of advertised brands.

Nevertheless, this study provides evidence of advertising effects that are at least as substantial as those reported for news learning. This should not be surprising; the care that goes into crafting the advertising is at least as extensive as that which goes into designing the news portion of the program. Both the news and ads appear to do the jobs for which they were intended: they inform young viewers about current events, and they inform them about (and enhance their desire for) specific products.

Indeed, the major three-year study funded by Whittle Communications was not permitted to examine the advertising issue (Johnston and Brzezinski 1992, Johnston and Anderman 1993).

One might have anticipated that advertising would have less of an impact than our data demonstrate here. After all, these youngsters are bombarded daily with advertising from adolescent-oriented radio stations and magazines as well as television. Commercials for soft drinks, jeans, candies, skin cleansers, gum, movies, and sneakers consistently target young consumers. The in-school showing, however, perhaps offers an implicit endorsement of advertised brands and an opportunity for paying closer attention to the ads than students would get in a group or at home, where they can use the remote control to quickly remove any advertising from the screen. Perhaps with regular exposure to so many ads for so many different brands, the in-school showing provides an excuse for differentiating among the hordes of brand names.

Even more compelling is the difference in "materialism" scores. We might speculate that Channel One has violated the final haven of escape from commercialism—the school building—and has eroded the students' resistance to advertising. Students may even be reverting to a more puerile "gimme" stage. On the other hand, soft drink machines and other marketing/advertising ventures have long had a place in school buildings. Why should one more effort make any difference? The answer is that there may well be something different about watching a professional news program and national market advertising specially designed for young viewers.

Finally, Channel One provides educators with an excellent opportunity to educate youth in consumer behavior skills. The initiative appears, however, to have been lost. Nowhere have we seen discussion about using Channel One to further understanding of persuasive strategies or consumer needs and motivations. Curricular goals for the program (as reviewed by Johnston and Anderman 1993) focus on incorporating news content into teachers' lesson plans but ignore advertising.

A curriculum component that includes Channel One commercials could diminish, and perhaps reverse, the advertising's impact and head off parents' and critics' fears. A typical curriculum might include lessons on advertising's selling intent, the technical ways in which ads improve a product's image, the use of celebrity endorsements, emotional appeals, premium appeals, targeting strategies, and so on (Roberts et al. 1980).

These final speculations provide interesting notions for subsequent research efforts. The bottom line for school districts, however, may be how badly they want or need the telecommunication equipment included in the Channel One package offering, and whether they want to pay that price to get better informed—and more greedy—young citizens.

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Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of American Schools

by Alex Molnar

There are many reasons why corporations try to put materials in schools. They may simply want to sell something to the kids. Companies that sell snack food, candy, clothing, and personal care products are often in this category. Other companies may want to develop a consumer base for their products down the line. These include computer manufacturers, credit card companies, and even car manufacturers.

Then there are the companies and industries with image problems. The mining, energy, plastics, and food industries crank out tons of propaganda aimed at schools, usually under the guise of "environmental" or "nutritional" education. The Plastic Bag Association, for example, has developed a program called Don't Let a Good Thing Go to Waste, and the American Forest Foundation has Project Learning Tree. After the *Valdez* oil spill, Exxon produced a video entitled *Scientists and the Alaska Oil Spill.* After watching the Exxon video, students might be excused for thinking that perhaps the massive spill wasn't really very harmful to the natural habitat of Prince William Sound at all. *Scientists and the Alaska Oil Spill* was exposed on the television program *60 Minutes* in 1993. However, for the most part, promotional materials flood into schools unknown to the general public and unmentioned by those who allow it to be used.

Exxon also produces a science program called the Energy Cube that includes a game in which students play residents of a planet that is warming up. The view conveyed to the game's participants is, in

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Excerpted from *Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of American Schools* (Westview Press, 1996). © 1996 by Alex Molnar. Reprinted with permission.

the words of one critic, not to "reduce fossil fuel use but to jack up air conditioning."[1]

Any of the estimated 70,000 teachers who have used Procter & Gamble's Decision Earth "environmental education" materials, if they were not very careful, may have taught their young scholars that clear-cutting forests is a good way to create new wildlife habitats. None of those messy questions about ecological damage caused by the practice are raised in the material. Decision Earth, aimed at students in grades 7 through 12, also has kind words about the impact of mining, disposable diapers, and waste-to-waste incineration (which, students are expected to learn, is "recycling").[2]

Since sponsored material is rarely subjected to the same review as regular texts, teachers are on their own.

The American Egg Board (The Incredible Journey from Hen to Home) wants kids to know about the nutritional virtues of eggs and the positive side of the cholesterol story. When controversy erupted over the use of bovine growth hormone, Monsanto produced a videotape aimed at schoolchildren which assured viewers that milk from cows using the chemical was indistinguishable from other milk. The Monsanto tape came as a shock to one Wisconsin dairy producer who was working as a substitute teacher when she saw scientifically disputed information favorable to the Monsanto product presented as fact.[3] In this case, a teacher with expert knowledge was able to spot the problem. However, no teacher can possess enough expert knowledge to sort out truth from distortion in every topic covered by the sponsored material that enters the schools. Since sponsored material is rarely subjected to the same review as regular texts, teachers are on their own. That's exactly the way many sponsoring corporations like it.

Free materials, at a time when teachers often have to spend their own money on supplies for their classrooms, are an irresistible lure for many. Even teachers who have qualms about going along find it hard to say no to businesses intent on pushing their way through the schoolhouse door.

Exploiting the credibility it has achieved as a publisher of classroom magazines for over seventy-five years, Scholastic has become one of the most aggressive—and shameless—of the companies marketing to children. In its promotional materials, Scholastic brags about its clients: "These companies already experience the power of trust with Scholastic: AT&T, American Express, Apple Computer, Coca-Cola Foods, Discover Card, IBM, S. C. Johnson Wax, Thomas J. Lipton, M&M/Mars, Milton Bradley, Mott's, NBC, Nabisco, NYNEX, OXY 10, Procter & Gamble, Warner Brothers, Warner Lambert."

Scholastic also explains why it should be the marketer of choice for well-educated businesspeople: "[Scholastic is] the *only publishing pipeline covering the entire pre-K to 12 grade marketplace. . . . Its products are interactive—teachers involve students by using Scholastic magazines and materials. . . . The classroom offers marketers a virtually non-competitive advertising arena.*"

The blurry distinction between private profit and public interest has helped open the door to countless firms pretending to promote student learning.

For the right price, Scholastic will provide single-sponsor magazines, inserts, and special sections, contests, posters, teaching guides, videos, software, research, and books. The titles of its promotional pieces include: "*Discover Card* and Scholastic Give Teens Extra Credit," *Minute Maid* Puts the Squeeze on the Competition with a Summer Reading Program," and "To Billy Joel, *CBS Records* and Scholastic History Is Hot."[4]

Scholastic is by no means the only educational marketer with dollar signs in its eyes. The increasingly blurry distinction between special interests and private profit, on the one hand, and public interest and the general welfare, on the other, has helped open the door to countless firms that market products in the classroom while pretending to promote student learning.

LEARNING CAN BE SWEET . . . OR SALTY

Lifetime Learning Systems of Fairfield, Connecticut (owned by K–III Communications, the same company that owns *Weekly Reader* and Channel One[5]), supplies schools with bushel baskets of "free" materials sponsored by business interests and, in some cases, foreign governments. Teachers routinely receive materials from Lifetime Learning like the following pieces, sent out in a large white envelope addressed to the "Third Grade Teacher."

"OPEN IMMEDIATELY!" the envelope commands, "FREE educational program focusing on math, social science, and language arts skills enclosed." With this buildup, few teachers can resist tearing open the envelope to see what it contains to help them teach their students math, social science, and language arts. Inside, the teacher finds an "educational program" entitled Count Your Chips. Under the heading "Lifetime Learning Systems, Inc. . . . an Experience in Dynamic Education" is an introductory letter. "Dear Educator," the letter begins, "February is National Potato Lover's Month and Snack Food Month. It's a great time to think about the vegetable that we all love to eat but too often take for granted—the potato."

The introduction to Count Your Chips advises, "Fun facts about potatoes and the ever-popular potato chip will be used to help your students sharpen skills in computation, problem solving, conducting research, and writing." The teacher learns that, in addition to teaching "computation, problem solving, graphing and other skills," Lifetime Learning wants "to educate students on the background of potato chips, including when and how potato chips were invented." The program provides worksheets, a teacher's guide, and suggestions for activities.

Count Your Chips is not a bizarre or isolated example of corporate marketing gone mad. It is only one of countless similar packets of materials sent free of charge and often unsolicited to teachers by firms such as Lifetime Learning Systems that have been hired to promote a product.

When the marketers promote their programs on the pages of *Advertising Age*, there is little of the pretense of educational significance that accompanies presentations to educators. No fiction about important educational content is necessary for the corporate clients the marketing firms are trying to attract. Lifetime gets down to business when it talks directly to its potential clients. "THEY'RE READY TO SPEND AND WE REACH THEM!" screams one Lifetime Learning ad. "Kids are big spenders. But they don't spend much time listening to what marketers have to say," corporations are warned. "You need to capture their attention and Lifetime Learning Systems can show you how." The ad goes on:

> Kids spend 40 percent of each day in the classroom where traditional advertising can't reach them. Now, YOU CAN ENTER THE CLASSROOM through custom-made learning materials created with specific market-

> ing objectives in mind. Communicate with young spenders directly and, through them, their teachers and families as well. For more than a decade, Lifetime Learning Systems has helped over 300 corporations achieve their marketing goals, cost effectively, in the classroom. To find out how we can help increase your share of the youth market, call [. . .].

In another ad, Lifetime Learning is even more direct. Potential clients are asked to "IMAGINE millions of students discussing your product in class. IMAGINE their teachers presenting your organization's point of view. IMAGINE your corporate message reaching their parents through literature the students take home." The ad concludes with the invitation to "let Lifetime Learning Systems take your message into the classroom, where the young people you want to reach are forming attitudes that will last a lifetime."

No one can imagine that potato chips and fruit snacks are going to improve the performance of America's schools.

There is no mention of encouraging school reform or improving teaching or addressing America's lack of competitiveness in these ads—with good reason. No one in his or her right mind can imagine that potato chips and fruit snacks are going to do anything to help reconstruct America's industrial base or improve the performance of America's schools. The people reading such ads know why these marketing programs are created, and they would laugh at such claims.

If America's capacity to renew its democracy rests on an educated citizenry making well-informed public policy decisions, every American is poorly served when public schools turn their curricula into an educational flea market open to anyone who has the money to set up a table. Yet that is precisely what the relentless assault on funding for public education and repeated calls for "cooperation" with the business community are pushing schools to do.

In 1990, General Motors came up with enough money to mail a copy of its "I Need the EARTH and the EARTH Needs Me" environmental education video to every public, private, and parochial elementary school in the country. Produced in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency (yet another example of public-private cooperation), "I Need the EARTH and the EARTH Needs Me" is a slick presentation that offers glowing images of kids breathing, swimming, walking, and running in an idealized environment of pristine air, sparkling water, and picturesque landscapes. The emphasis in the video is on things like planting trees, conserving water while brushing teeth, recycling, and riding a bike on occasion. Judging by the video, mass transportation is virtually absent from GM's plan for a cleaner environment. However, car pools are recommended, as is recycling used motor oil.

GM's video urges all people to do their part, but doing their part does not include any sort of investigation into the politics and economics of pollution or any political activity that might help produce a cleaner environment. Perhaps GM believes that everyone is equally culpable—be it a fourth-grader who carelessly litters or a corporate executive who knowingly allows tons of toxins to be dumped into the air, water, and soil. The only difference seems to be that GM expects the child to be responsible. The corporate executive is never mentioned.

Corporate-sponsored materials should only be used if they are indepensable to the education of children.

Instead of giving any hint of an ongoing battle over environmental policy, GM urges students to know that "we" (whoever that may be) are working to make things better. Students are assured that scientists are trying to make factories cleaner and to see to it that cars and trucks pollute less.

It would be hard to refute a single factual statement in the GM video and the accompanying teacher's guide. Nevertheless, since the picture painted is so incomplete, the video is misleading. Providing students with a comprehensive picture of environmental issues is probably less important to GM than how successful "I Need the EARTH . . ." has been in helping to paint a positive, environmentally responsible image of the corporation and framing environmental issues in a way compatible with GM's corporate policy. In other words, although it may not be good education, the video is good PR.

DECADES OF BATTLE

The struggle to ensure that public schools actually serve the public interest rather than the interests of companies like GM has been going on for years. In 1929, the National Education Association (NEA) published its *Report of the Committee on Propaganda in the*

Schools.[6] The report's author, E. C. Broome, argued that corporate-sponsored materials should, in general, only be used if they are indispensable to the education of children. If widely adopted, this principle would virtually guarantee that most corporate-sponsored materials would be taken out of classrooms.

In the years following the NEA report, corporate attempts to place propaganda in the schools accelerated. In the early and mid-1950s, two professional organizations took notice and issued reports describing how to best use what they blandly referred to as "free materials."[7] By 1957, one researcher had found that 97 percent of the teachers he interviewed used sponsored materials. To his dismay, few of the teachers indicated that they used any ethical standard in deciding which materials to use, and virtually no teacher received any guidance on the matter from his or her school administrator.[8]

It was left to Sheila Harty to sound a clear and credible alarm in her 1979 report *Hucksters in the Classroom.* Harty found a shocking amount of self-serving corporate material was being used in the nation's schools.[9] She particularly focused on industry propaganda in four areas: nutrition, nuclear power, the environment, and economics. Since 1979, in the deregulatory, turn-a-quick-buck, what-business-says-goes, "public-private partnership" American political environment, this sort of corporate marketing in the schools has grown like mold spores in a warm petri dish. The continuing commercial onslaught led Consumers Union to call for schools to be made ad-free zones in its 1990 report *Selling America's Kids: Commercial Pressures on Kids of the 90's.*[10] The group's 1995 report, *Captive Kids*, details the extent to which school advertising is continuing apace.[11] *Marketing Madness* (also published in 1995), written by Michael Jacobson and Laurie Mazur of the Center for the Study of Commercialism, offers an encyclopedic assessment of commercialism in the United States—including the schools. It isn't a pretty picture.[12]

Despite some signs of increasing opposition among parents and teachers to corporate exploitation of the public schools, the onslaught continues. A number of efforts by concerned professionals have had little impact. In 1982, the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business (SOCAP) offered voluntary guidelines for business-sponsored consumer education materials. In 1989, the International Organization of Consumers Union (IOCU) issued its Code of Good Practice and Guidelines for Controlling Business-

Sponsored Educational Materials Used in Schools. In 1990, the Milwaukee Conference on Corporate Involvement in Schools developed guidelines for use of sponsored materials that were subsequently adopted by several education associations and other organizations. And in 1996, the National Education Association began distributing what it calls "The Preserve Classroom Integrity Pledge," intended to check the use of corporate-sponsored junk.

Most educators seem unaware of professional guidelines intended to govern the use of corporate materials.

To this point, however, most educators—never mind the general public—seem unaware of the existence of either professional guidelines or ethical standards intended to govern the use of corporate materials.

To complicate the debate, many educational organizations are themselves guilty of questionable practices. They often lend their names and credibility to programs and activities with corporate "partners." The same corporations that sell products in the schools frequently have booths at teachers' conventions and help underwrite the cost of professional conferences.

The American Federation of Teachers and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development both lent their names to the Chrysler Learning Connection, a program to encourage reading. The program is publicized in magazine inserts that feature prominent ads for Chrysler products side by side with the logos of the American Federation of Teachers and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The message is clear: Chrysler is a good corporate citizen that cares about children and their families. Two major education organizations attest to it.

Besides the magazine ads, the program also includes a video and a poster, sent to every elementary school in the United States, featuring activities to help families encourage their children to read. The materials intended for the classroom don't promote Chrysler very hard, but the accompanying videotape gives Robert Eaton, chairman of Chrysler, a chance to introduce himself to children and their families. The "educational" activities themselves might charitably be described as second rate. Certainly, they hardly exemplify the sort of high academic standard the cosponsoring educational organizations claim to support.

The American Library Association signed on with McDonald's and Scholastic to produce the highly commercial All-American Reading Challenge, a program described by the 1995 Consumers Union report *Captive Kids* as "basically an advertisement for McDonald's.[13]

Children who have the least are often exploited the most by school marketing schemes.

Caught up in the commercial torrent, the professional organizations of educators risk losing whatever credibility they may have with the public as well as their ability to promote real education reform. Far fewer people would believe that the product evaluations in *Consumer Reports* are unbiased if, for example, the magazine took ads from the companies whose products it rates. For the same reason, educational organizations risk the appearance—and the real possibility—of trimming their positions because they don't want to offend a corporate partner.

A PATTERN OF ABUSE

One or two examples of dishonest, self-serving, dangerous, or downright bizarre corporate material might be ignored as aberrations. But it's no laughing matter when, by their sheer volume, sponsored materials threaten to turn the school curriculum into a booming, buzzing confusion; when the energy and focus of a school is constantly being diverted from the education of children to the promotion of commercial interests; when the trust parents have that what their children are being taught in school is important information, honestly presented, is routinely violated; and when children are encouraged to associate a particular product with school success.

As is so often the case, the children who have the least are also often exploited the most by school marketing schemes. Schools attended by poor and working-class children are the most likely to be inadequately equipped and have outdated curriculum materials. Children in those schools are most likely to be assigned to overcrowded classrooms and taught by teachers with the least experience in large school systems, where it is easier to get around any prohibitions about advertising in the schools. The teachers, desperate for curriculum materials and with little time to assess the value of the "free" handouts they receive, have virtually no critical information available to help them. They may have principals who encourage them to use the junk, reasoning that what marketers send them is better than nothing.

Advertisers exploit the teachers' desperation and their altruism very effectively. Marketers know many teachers would be willing to wear a sandwich board and walk up and down Main Street hawking bathroom disinfectant if it meant their students could get a computer. So it is that children who already have less money spent on them than the affluent offspring of business executives are harmed again by having more of their time and attention diverted by advertising scams that push them further and further behind academically.

At a time when poor children have been killed for their shoes, they are forced to watch advertising messages for high-priced sneakers. At a time when American children are increasingly overweight and at risk of developing coronary disease, they have been taught how the heart functions from a poster advertising junk food and then served high-fat meals by the fast food concessionaires that run their school cafeterias. At a time when too many children abuse alcohol, they are taught history by a brewery. At a time when many children are literally made sick by the air they breathe, they are told that some of our nation's biggest polluters are their friends. And at a time when young people hunger for real connections and genuine relationships, they are fed illusions of people for whom they are little more than units of consumption.

The market is utterly incapable of making high-quality schools available to every child.

The basic skills and the common body of knowledge we believe every child should have cannot be allowed to succumb to a cacophony of commercials and blatant corporate and political propaganda. Unfortunately, when the market perverts educational values, it is only doing what markets are supposed to do—providing opportunities for self-interested individuals to profit.

The market can offer no guidance on matters of justice and fairness that are at the heart of democratic civil society and that *should* be at the heart of its schools and other institutions. Left to its own devices, the market is as utterly incapable of making high-quality schools available to every child, regardless of economic circumstances, as it is of providing a job for every American who needs one.

Since the market is concerned with buying and selling, it cannot represent the interests of children. Turning children over to the market assures that they will be treated as an expense to be reduced or a resource to be harvested. In the process, some children and their families will necessarily be considered more valuable than others. For the market to produce winners, there always have to be losers.

Over time, market values have eroded and debased the humane values of democratic civil society. Listen closely to the language that already fills discussions about school reform. It is the language of commerce applied to human relationships. Children are defined as "future customers," "future workers," and "future taxpayers." There is little talk of the value of children in their own right—right now. There is lots of talk about "tough love" but little mention of any other kind of love. Costs are put in terms of "the bottom line," not what justice demands. When the logic of the market is allowed to dominate society, relationships are inevitably turned into commodities to be bought and sold. And every person can be assigned a material value, either great or small. The antithesis is the democratic ideal that all people are created equal.

Market values have eroded and debased the humane values of democratic civil society.

The hallmark of America's advanced market economy is not universal well-being. It is universal advertising. The illusion of everything from happiness to fighting hunger to health care to political leadership is substituted for the real thing. The market leads toward a virtual world in which "P.R. armies have forged a new world of pseudo-events, video press releases, infomercials, letter writing campaigns, manufactured celebrities . . . all of which has made us disoriented and suspicious."[14]

In the United States, every available surface, from shopping carts to buses to computer Web pages to public schools, is now blanketed with commercials. Children are sold to advertisers from the time they are born, taught that possessions define their value, and blessed with lives filled with pseudo-events, pseudo-emotions, and pseudo-knowledge provided by marketers. Yet we expect these children to grow up capable of making independent judgments and effectively participating in democratic civic life.

Parents can tell their child's school principal that they do not want their child being taught using corporate-sponsored materials.

The debate over public education reform cannot be understood by thinking only about schools. It is part of a much broader struggle: whether America will move in the direction of its democratic ideals or be further ensnared in the logic of the market. The outcome is by no means assured. As author Leslie Savan has written, in the United States there is now "no human emotion or concern—love, lust, war, childhood, innocence, social rebellion, spiritual enlightenment, even disgust with advertising—that cannot be turned into a sales pitch."[15]

The challenge facing American society and its children is not how to find ever more ingenious ways to speed the market on its ways. The real challenge of the next century is to take control of our lives back from the market.

Fortunately, even without leadership from government or from the boardroom, effective action is possible. The public schools do, after all, still belong to the people. Citizens can write their representatives and senators and demand that school-based advertising no longer be tax deductible. They can attend school board meetings, ask for a list of all sponsored materials and programs used in their district, and request an accounting of how much staff time is devoted to these programs and how much school time children spend involved with them.

School boards can be pushed to develop explicit guidelines governing the use of sponsored materials—guidelines that, at a minimum, require that those materials be subject to the same evaluation procedures as the regular school curriculum. Parents can tell their child's school principal that they do not want their child being taught or evaluated for work done using corporate-sponsored materials or for participating in corporate promotions. They can demand that their child be provided alternative educational experiences during the time taken up by corporate-sponsored materials or promotions. Citizens can write to their state superintendents of public instruction and their state representatives and senator and tell them they want schools to lose state aid for any time devoted to advertising. Finally, consumers can begin to make life uncomfortable for companies that advertise in schools. They can tell advertisers that they will not purchase products marketed in schools and that they will encourage others to follow suit. Consumers can strike at the public relations payoff that leads many firms into the classroom.

The exploitation of our schools by corporate hucksters willing to put their short-term profit ahead of the public's long-term well-being makes the already difficult task of school improvement harder. As corporate America's market-based reform band plays, commercialism is engulfing our schools and children; advertising messages are blanketing our classrooms; more and more time is devoted to trivial, distracting, dishonest, and harmful activities; and even larger numbers of our children receive an education that falls far short of any defensible standard of excellence or equity.

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6. Edwin C. Broome, "Report of the Committee on Propaganda in the Schools" (presented at the Atlanta meeting of the National Education Association, July 1929.)

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8. Donald D. Burk, "Free Teaching Materials—Assets or Liabilities?" *School Executive* 76, no. 12 (August 1957), pp. 55–57.

9. Sheila Harty, *Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Study of Responsive Law, 1979).

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11. Consumers Union, *Captive Kids*.

12. Michael F. Jacobson and Laurie Ann Mazur, *Marketing Madness: A Survival Guide for a Consumer Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

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Do Not Use as Directed: Corporate Materials in the Schools

by John Olson

The offer of corporate materials is one many schools cannot refuse. To begin with, corporations produce materials about up-to-the-second topics, using the latest advances in educational technologies—and everyone knows schools never have all the resources they require, especially current ones. In addition, not only are the materials free or available at low cost, but sophisticated training is often provided. Indeed, they are often linked—no training, no material.

Further, teacher groups and various state agencies may endorse corporate materials because they have participated in their development or share goals in common. Indeed, state agencies themselves are major sources of free materials, which naturally reflect the policies of government that the agency hopes to foster through the school system. These endorsing groups give the materials an aura of legitimacy, making it easier to use them, perhaps less critically than were they not endorsed.

Moreover, corporate materials themselves often have the look of bona fide educational ones. The packaging, the teacher guides, the handouts—all give the impression that the materials are part of the usual resources teachers use. Often corporate materials have this look because the contractors who work for corporations hire teachers to produce them.

It is not surprising that school boards cooperate with corporations in making materials available to schools. How can schools not use such materials?

From *Educational Leadership*, vol. 47, no. 4, December 1989/January 1990, pp. 79-80. © 1989 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Reprinted with permission.

Taking a critical look at any corporate materials—whether from government agencies or commercial corporations—is really a subset of critical analysis of text materials, and textbooks themselves are not exempt. It is quite possible to find slanted treatment in texts, treatment that is politically acceptable, but wrongheaded.

However, textbooks are written with intentions different from those of corporate propaganda. Educational virtues are supposed to, and generally do, control their production. But the corporation has a vested interest in the way you think about the subject matter of the materials. For example, the Milk Marketing Board cares how you think about milk—it has a partisan view about the benefits of milk. So does the Egg Marketing Board about eggs, as does McDonald's about how you view hamburgers. They want the public to think well of what they do. Conversely, educational textbooks are intended to get students to think critically and carefully about what they read.

Educators must be vigilant about the status of corporate materials.

Corporations are free, of course, to promote their views—we live in a plural society, and the marketplace of ideas is open for business. However, educators must be ever vigilant about the status of corporate materials: Why are they produced at all? What is their point of view? How should we think about the subject under study if we follow directions for their use? Why should we follow their directions at all? Intended as they are to rally people to a cause, materials produced with a public relations aim are prone to misrepresentation.

Clearly, schools need access to materials, but corporations cannot supply the materials we need. We can, however, use them as opportunities to learn about how propaganda works, to recover the deep messages of the materials. We can use them—but only cautiously. Teachers need access to other materials—books on nutrition, for example, from an alternative point of view. These other materials, alas, are not as well produced. They lack the input from official teacher groups, although they are often produced by teachers with alternative ideas. They receive neither corporate, nor government, nor official teacher support—only corporate materials receive such support, and many of these alternative materials are flawed. They, too, tend to hide key issues and distort the other side of things, but they do present an alternative view.

The only way any materials written with a propaganda intention—corporate, activist, or errant mainstream text—become educational is in the hands of teachers whose intention it is to engender critical awareness and independence of thought. This is the essential antidote to propaganda.

Materials written with a propaganda intention become education in the hands of teachers whose intention is to engender critical awareness.

How can teachers engender critical awareness and independence of thought in their students? In the case of science, which is my particular area of concern, it is important for teachers to reflect on the way the subject itself is taught. Our very idea of what science is like as a discipline may be faulty as a result of how the subject is presented. Are we wedded to a static and antiquated idea of what the doing of science is like? Are we afraid of our ignorance of controversial issues? The first step in engendering the critical spirit is to take a critical view of issues and of how one's subject itself is taught.

Second, as texts often do not capture the spirit of critical inquiry, teachers must look elsewhere, seeking out groups with alternative points of view, for example, on energy, on nutrition, on health, and finding out the basis for their alternative view. We must analyze and evaluate what the text says about the way knowledge claims are dealt with, about competing theories in the subject, about how the subject is applied in everyday life, and about related social issues. An analysis of the deficiencies of texts gives teachers a platform for deciding what supplementary materials are needed and how they can be treated.

Third, teachers can supplement texts by designing their own materials. They could also form consortia for sharing their materials and for providing support to each other as they tackle the difficult task of introducing social issues in the classroom based on a critical approach to resources. This is not a new idea, but basing the development of such materials on a critical evaluation of texts and stressing social issues may be new for some, and so might be embracing a collaborative approach to such development.

In the end, it is the teacher who renders materials truly educational by making them serve educational purposes—the cultivation of critical awareness and independence of mind. Students need to be able to think for themselves, sort out the value basis of argument, see behind rhetoric, and assess the validity of the claims on their allegiance. These habits of mind run counter to the purposes of corporations whose very existence depends on uncritical allegiance to their products and their points of view. If corporations want to invest in materials directed at schools, that is their choice—they have a right to produce those materials. We have a responsibility to see them for what they are.

Investors Look to Education as Possibility for High Flier

by Mary B. W. Tabor

The 300 dark-suited investment industry executives sat crowded into heavily draped meeting rooms at the Plaza Hotel in New York, watching slide show after slide show about companies they had never heard of in an industry they know little about—the business of educating children.

"Who is your competition?" Thomas Lehrman, an analyst from Tiger Management, apologetically asked one presenter. "I really don't know your market."

So began Smith Barney's first Education Industry Conference last week, the second such meeting this year in which the world's biggest institutional investors, from J. P. Morgan to Fidelity Investments to Warburg Pincus, have come scouting for gold in the form of education companies that are—or might soon be—publicly traded.

"Education today, like health care twenty years ago, is a vast, highly localized industry ripe for change," said Mary C. Tanner, a managing director at Lehman Brothers, which held its first education conference in February. "The emergence of H.M.O.'s and hospital management companies created enormous opportunities for investors. We believe the same pattern will occur in education."

Until recently, the idea that schools could provide fertile ground for investors seemed almost absurd, especially in an era of budget cuts and spending limits. But with demands for more efficiency and enterprise in educating the nation's 44 million schoolchildren, many schools have turned to for-profit companies looking for solutions.

From *The New York Times*, May 29, 1996. © 1996 by The New York Times Co. Reprinted by permission.

Five years ago, ambitious ventures like Education Alternatives Inc. and Christopher Whittle's Edison Project promised to run schools and school systems for profit. Their first attempts proved overly optimistic—E.A.I. lost most of its urban contracts; Mr. Whittle, a featured guest at both the Lehman and Smith Barney conferences, scaled back after overspending on development.

Today, many of the most successful companies are in specific niches, offering classroom instruction or tutoring; selling textbooks, software, or technology; designing curriculums; providing consulting services; or supplying cafeteria or janitorial services. A recent study estimates that for-profit companies take in $30 billion of the $340 billion that the United States spends each year on preschool to high school education.

For-profit companies take in $30 billion of the $340 billion that the United States spends each year on preschool to high school education.

Still, some education experts warn that there are inherent problems in viewing schools as a new market. "The dilemma is that we want to bring the efficiency of the market into an enterprise that we see is not very efficient," said John F. Jennings, director of the Center on National Education Policy. "On the other hand, we are dealing with the minds of children and the future of the country. That's not something you put into a box and sell."

But businesses are forging ahead. To watch the emerging education market, Ms. Tanner, one of the first investment brokers to focus on health care as a profitable arena, set up a special group at Lehman earlier this year. Smith Barney, a unit of Travelers Group, did the same last month. And several smaller investment and venture capital groups, like Eduventures in Boston and Sterling Capital in Baltimore, have formed in recent years.

Some of the companies, like DeVry, Apollo Group, and ITT Educational Services, which run post-secondary degree-granting schools, have been considered relatively low-risk investments because of their steady growth in enrollment and graduation rates and a predictable revenue stream.

Others, however, especially smaller companies involved in elementary and secondary schools, have left traders with their heads in their hands. Education Alternatives Inc., for one, saw its common stock plummet from $48.50 a share in November of 1993 to $3.688 a share yesterday on the Nasdaq exchange, a dive spurred by negative press reports and the loss of the second of its two high-profile contracts to run schools in Hartford and Baltimore. In the same period, Nobel Education Dynamics, which owns and runs 108 private elementary and middle schools and child-care centers in 12 states, has seen its stock jump to $17.75 from $3 on the Nasdaq small cap market.

The Education Industry Report, a newsletter that rates the performance of twenty-five publicly traded education companies, including Education Alternatives and Nobel, says that the stock price of those companies rose 32.07 percent between April 1995 and April 1996, compared with 13.15 percent for the Nasdaq composite index and 10.23 percent for the Russell 2000 index of small companies.

Many of the stocks carry exorbitant price tags, given their earnings, a sign that investors may be bidding up the prices.

At both the Lehman Brothers and Smith Barney conferences, attendance was between 250 and 300 people, twice that expected.

"I'm just trying to keep abreast of the confusion in the marketplace," said Bob Bohn, president of New York Achievement, who was scouting for Innovest Group Inc., the majority shareholder of his company. Mr. Bohn stood throughout the morning watching the presentations with twenty folders from various companies under his arm.

New York Achievement holds the New York City franchise for Sylvan Learning Centers. Sylvan's franchiser, Sylvan Learning Systems, has a $1.25 million contract with Newark to run a remedial education program in three local high schools.

Though more education related companies pop up each day, for-profit ventures that focus solely on education still account for less than $5 billion in spending, says Gerald Odening, a vice president at Smith Barney. And for every one that is publicly held, three other companies are still private, with public offerings perhaps two or three years down the road, if ever.

But Wall Street is hopeful.

"A number of companies are moving toward initial public offerings or partial spinoffs," said Mr. Odening, who organized the conference. "So we expect this will become a good investment area in the next year or two."

Selling the Schools a Bill of Goods: The Marketing of Computer-Based Education

by Douglas D. Noble

Despite the many volumes that have been compiled about computer-based education (CBE) over the last two decades, there is surprisingly little written on the history of this enterprise, and almost nothing written from the point of view of corporate strategists attempting to crack and technologize the education market. Instead, the vast bulk of the literature takes the perspective of the bewildered or the enthusiastic consumer, and assumes as a given the hyperbole of inevitability constructed by corporate marketeers.

What I hope to show is that from the start to the present, Big Business has never really known what it was doing in this arena. Again and again, major firms have exploited political opportunities to break into the education market and have flailed wildly, trying to make the killing they had convinced themselves was there for the taking. Far more often than not they have fallen on their faces, failing miserably and retreating to cut their losses . . . only to lick their wounds and try again, equally oblivious, once the next opportunity arose or another technology product hit the market. Despite these repeated failures, the cumulative impact of all these fits and starts on primary and secondary education has been an avalanche of hardware and software glutting the schools.

These repeated failures did not occur merely because Big Business has misunderstood the education market and the culture of the schools. These failures have resulted from the breathtakingly poor business sense of those corporate leaders most prominent in leading the charge to reform education through technological innovation.

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Repeatedly, leaders of major Fortune 500 firms have insisted with blind determination on believing their own illusions and on following the predictions of information-age fortune tellers, despite massive evidence to the contrary available to them, even from their own lieutenants. The hubris of these men in their self-appointed role to "save" education, to pursue the holy grail of electronic teaching, to come up with the "killer application" for their glorious computer gadgetry, has for three decades driven their firms to distraction, and sometimes to destruction.

And this high-tech sideshow has created an appalling distraction for education and educators as well, as they have been taken for a ride on the roller coaster of computer development and marketing madness, leaving the schools awash in electronic gadgetry. The ride is by no means over, as telecommunications and entertainment giants jostle for favored places on the education information superhighway into the nation's schools and homes. Perhaps a little historical reflection will sober a few would-be enthusiasts among the present corps of teachers, artists, and other thoughtful people, regarding not only the technologies themselves, but perhaps more importantly, the credibility and legitimacy of the self-appointed high-tech corporate saviors of education. Certainly with state and federal politics once again greasing corporate entrée into the education marketplace, there is little chance that reasonable reflection will stop the charade.

BACKGROUND: MILITARY R & D AND CBE

The Defense Department was the primary catalyst for early development of computer-based instruction.[1] Most early research in the field took place under military sponsorship, and substantial military sponsorship of research on artificial intelligence, cognitive science, multimedia, and virtual reality applied to training and learning, continues to this day. The field itself grew out of military research and development in the late 1950s at the juncture of two areas: training science and what we now call computer science. One researcher, Harry Silberman, compared CBE to computer programming: "Instead of programming computer behavior, the educator is programming human behavior."[2] The early vision of CBE at the Systems Development Corporation in Santa Monica, California (SDC) was for educational institutions to become "man-machine digital systems in their own right," with "attributes of real-time control systems."[3] At the University of Illinois, the first experiments with cost-effective automated instruction, via time-shared PLATO terminals, were lavishly funded by a wide range of military agencies. At the military research firm Bolt, Beranek, and Newman (BBN) in Cambridge, Massachusetts (still in the 1990s a major player in CBE development), research on human-machine communication and interaction led to early experiments in automated instruction. These experiments suggested to BBN researchers that CBE, with the "deliberate exploitation of reinforcement and human engineering techniques, might be used to 'trap' the attention of students."[4]

Computer-based education jumped from experimental tinkering to corporate panacea for the nation's schools.

Scattered experiments constituted the research base for CBE in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The experiments were rudimentary, using cumbersome equipment thrown together for the purpose, and utilizing local schoolchildren for experimentation either on site or in a local school. The primary focus in all sites was research, either on automated instructional delivery and control systems or on man-machine communication and human learning.

A turning point came in the mid-1960s, when these isolated research efforts would suddenly become the darlings of Fortune 500 companies, and CBE researchers would be courted with lucrative offers for high-stakes commercial ventures. Most would be "bought up" by large firms,[5] and for some, this occasioned opportunities for "gaining access to children of school age for . . . experimental investigations."[6] Computer-based education suddenly jumped from military-funded, experimental tinkering to corporate panacea for the nation's schools.

CBE BECOMES A COMMERCIAL VENTURE

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, military funding began to dry up. Defense contractors dependent on federal funding began to seek other sources of federal money and new subsidized markets. In the years 1958 through 1965, they found their answer in "a powerful [new] base of operations, [which] was established for the entrance of [these] American corporations into the profitable education industries."[7] With the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, followed by the Vocational Education Act in 1963, the Equal Opportunity Act in 1964 and finally, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, major defense contractors found their new subsidized market. This new market was established overnight to lure defense contractors to apply their military-derived "systems approach" to the newly discovered societal problems of poverty and educational failure. This new market answered the needs of a foundering defense industry as well as the desires of educational technology researchers seeking alternative sources of support and new "living laboratories" for their experimentation.

Through massive new federal expenditures now filling the void of military cutbacks, computer-based educational technology was given its first chance for widespread commercialization. The education and poverty markets provided the perfect opportunity for warmed-over military hardware and systems to be refashioned as weapons in the war on poverty and educational failure. This latest subsidization of educational technology research, development, and commercialization was, in effect, "the reselling of the Pentagon."[8] According to Oscar Gandy's dissertation by that title, the new social legislation enabled the capitalization of education with military technology and created an education market that did not exist before. Furthermore, the capitalization subsidy was producer-driven rather than consumer-driven, opening up a market for defense industry manufacturers rather than addressing any documented needs of schools, teachers, or students.

The capitalization of education with military technology created an education market that did not exist before.

The approaches of choice in the establishment of the beachhead were acquisition, diversification, and merger. Between 1964 and 1966, 120 combines and mergers were established to tap the education market. These hybrids typically coupled the "hardware" of technology firms with the instructional materials, or "software," provided by publishing houses. In short order, these couplings brought together IBM and educational publisher SRA; General Electric and Time, Inc./Silver Burdett; Xerox and Ginn/American Education Publications; RCA and Random House; Raytheon and D. C. Heath; RCA and Prentice-Hall; Litton and American Book Company; CBS and Allyn and Bacon/Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; GTE/Sylvania and *Reader's Digest;* and 3M and *Newsweek.* These mergers and joint ventures continued the military model of engineering psychology in its attempt to wed the hardnosed engineering disciplines to the "softer" social and human sciences of instructional psychology and pedagogy. Their goal was to tap what was considered to be an enormous potential market in the new "knowledge industry" of electronic publishing and "electronic education." This was the grail motivating the sudden avalanche of unprecedented corporate interest in the public schools.

The billions of dollars schools spend each year on computers and other technologies have brought few benefits to classroom instruction.

LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

There are now 5.8 million computers in the nation's schools, and over $2 billion is being spent yearly by schools to purchase hardware and software for the "information age." Yet there is a consensus that, except for a few futuristic demonstration projects, all of this money and hardware has had an insignificant effect on educational practice in the nation's schools.

The latest Office of Technology Assessment report on educational technology released in April 1995 concludes that because teacher training has been largely ignored, the billions of dollars schools spend each year on computers, software, and other technologies have brought few benefits to classroom instruction, despite the millions of computers now in the nation's schools.[9] Apple Computer, Inc., in a 1992 issue of *Macworld* magazine entitled "America's Shame," found "[a]ntiquated computers, unused computers, computers used for games and not for teaching, schools and teachers unprepared to use computers that they own, mismanaged or misdirected policies, and unknown hundreds of millions of dollars spent over the last decade for little return."[10] The truth is, the article concludes, "that we are groping toward [yet] another ill-defined approach to the implementation of technology in the hope that the next effort will be the one that brings order from chaos."[11]

Time magazine, in its Spring 1995 special issue "Welcome to Cyberspace," concedes as well that "the promised revolution has failed to materialize," despite the millions of computers and the billions of dollars. However, says *Time* (now a subsidiary of cable and entertainment giant Time Warner), the "bold predictions" of CBE pioneers of the 1960s, including those at Time, Inc., "were not wrong, just premature."[12] "It may take 10 years, or more likely 20," *Time's* paean to Cyberspace concludes, "but the prophets of the post-Gutenberg age in education will finally be proved right."[13] In a word, despite a dubious past and present, the euphoria continues, now more rancorous than ever, to revolutionize education with computer-based technology, this time linked up to Time Warner's and others' promised "information highway."

Business leaders, from the start of the CBE enterprise, have repeatedly blamed schools and teachers for the ineffectiveness and under-utilization of their educational technologies. They point to the schools' ponderous bureaucratic structures, their antiquated instructional methods, and teachers' ignorance of and resistance to technological innovation, as the explanations for why, after thirty years and millions of high-tech purchases, computers have still not made much of an impact on what happens in the nation's classrooms.

But blaming education is a 100-year-old refrain, popular with businessmen looking for a convenient scapegoat for their own failures. The truth is that corporate marketers of CBE have not devoted much energy to the training of teachers in technology, because such training is a long-term, costly undertaking, while their intent is to get computers into the schools today. Corporate marketers have also provided such a myriad of prematurely conceived uses for their gadgetry over the years, that teachers who have precious little time in their already arduous workdays cannot be bothered. If computers really could provide the revolutionary changes that have been promised for thirty years by their vendors, and if they could be used to accomplish these changes in an accessible way in the short term, many teachers and schools would jump at the opportunity. But the vendors have not delivered the goods, and pull out when the going gets rough or prolonged, pointing fingers as they leave.

So what lessons emerge from the early corporate marketing of computers in education that might be instructive in assessing the latest corporate efforts to revolutionize education with technology? In this section, I first try to clarify these lessons and then look briefly at how each in turn helps to clarify recent corporate efforts to change the educational process through technology.

> **Lesson 1:** Schools are typically sold a bill of goods, not the goods themselves. Penetration of the education market with computer-based technology has depended more on effective conditioning of the market through advertisement and ideology barrage than on the effectiveness of the technologies themselves.

Participants in the early ventures in CBE typically blamed their failure on the fact that the education market was not yet "ready" for their technology. This is partly true, but not because the technology itself was ahead of its time; rather, the ideological leavening of the education market had not yet set. Although the glamour of technology captivated some, the schools were still not fully conditioned by the rhetoric of the information age and computer age to welcome the gadgetry into classrooms. The first real inroads came with tax-deductible donations of microcomputers to schools in the late 1970s and with the ideological campaign for computer literacy and thinking skills ("mindstorms") in the early 1980s. By 1984, with *Time* magazine's celebration of the computer as its "man of the year" and the Nation At Risk report calling for computer literacy, even programming, as a "new basic skill," the information age had seemingly arrived and the schools opened up to a flood of computers.

The information age arrived and the schools opened up to a flood of computers.

In 1982, Steven Jobs, chairman of Apple Computer, Inc., tried to get an "Apple Bill" passed through the U.S. House of Representatives that would give the company tax deductions for computer donations to schools. It passed through the House but never made it to the Senate. However, later that year a similar bill passed the California legislature, to take effect from January 1983 to June 1984. The bill offered Apple a 25% tax credit from California taxes for computer equipment donations based on the fair market value of the donated equipment. This program, called "Kids Can't Wait," placed one Apple IIe computer in each of California's 9250 eligible elementary and secondary schools and afforded Apple great public relations visibility for its products. IBM and Hewlett Packard soon followed suit.

Meanwhile, not entirely satisfied with these arrangements, Apple, Tandy, IBM, and other companies represented by the American Electronics Association attempted to get Senate bills introduced during 1983 that would provide for deductions beyond the cost of donated equipment, up to a maximum of 200% of the equipment cost, thereby ensuring a profit for donations.[14] Apple and IBM were interested in the education market but not to revolutionize education, though they saturated the schools with such rhetoric. Rather, they were intent on establishing very early brand loyalty among students who would eventually become adult computer users.

At the same time, in California, State Superintendent of Instruction William Honig began a national trend by requiring computer literacy courses for all California high school graduates. "Computer literacy" was a term no one could define, but most states soon followed Honig's lead and invested heavily in technology to bring computer literacy to their students and prepare them for the information age. The term itself had been coined with just that scenario in mind. Andrew Molnar, director of the Office of Computing Activities at the National Science foundation (NSF), later recounted that educational technophiles at NSF were deeply concerned about the scattered, uncoordinated programs in computer-based instruction (including PLATO and BBN's LOGO) that a skeptical NSF was reluctantly funding. They wanted a coordinated effort to bring CBE into the schools. "We spent . . . something like a half a billion dollars on technology in education, but they were so uncoordinated that you either had to be a liar, a thief, or corrupt in order to pull all of these things together to do a program that would involve technology in any significant way."[15]

Molnar and his colleagues took just such a deceptive route:

> We started computer literacy in '72. We coined that phrase. It's sort of ironic. Nobody knows what computer literacy is. Nobody can define it. And the reason we selected computer literacy was because nobody could define it, and nobody knew what it was, and that it was a broad enough term that you could get all of these programs together under one roof.[16]

Molnar and others then set about holding prestigious national conferences on computer literacy, and eventually in the early 1980s the term took on a life of its own, resulting in millions of computers in schools.

Hundreds of thousands of computers also entered the schools amid the exaggerated claims by Seymour Papert and BBN that their LOGO software would bring thinking skills and "powerful ideas" into the classroom through child-centered computer programming.

In fact, LOGO was first conceived as a means to teach students grammar and then elementary mathematics; the idea that LOGO would teach generalized thinking came later. As one LOGO developer later recounted, "[T]he psychological dimension of LOGO, as represented by Papert's claim that LOGO programming would lead children to more explicit, better articulated reflection on their own cognitive processes and that this in turn would affect the character of their cognitive development, was in fact a late conceptual formulation."[17] It was an afterthought, one still never proven in years of research on LOGO use by children in schools, but an extremely marketable notion nonetheless. Computers would miraculously get kids to think powerful thoughts, simply by exploring a "microworld" programming environment designed for children. The image of a child at a computer came to symbolize intense intellectual inquiry akin to that depicted by Rodin's famous statue.

Hundreds of thousands of computers entered schools amid exaggerated claims.

The LOGO-inspired movement to enable children to think and have powerful ideas using computers flooded the schools with new hardware and software that now remain in the classrooms even as their exaggerated rationale has long since been abandoned. In a recent retrospective on LOGO,[18] its apologists and proselytizers, now reduced to an insular cadre at MIT's Media Lab, conceded that they had been "naive" and that once "realism . . . set in," they realized that the "LOGO culture" was drastically—and prematurely—oversold to the nation's schools. Only a handful of schools still use LOGO now, and with severely reduced expectations of its benefits for children. Meanwhile the cognitive tinkerers at MIT's Media Lab, now bankrolled by Lego Corporation along with the Department of Defense and NSF, continue to play with ever more sophisticated technological versions of LOGO as a vehicle for science and mathematic exploration. But there is no more talk of enhanced "thinking" or "powerful ideas."

The recent term "information superhighway" also serves the purpose of saturating schools with computer technology, this time bringing fiber optic cable and on-line services into the schools at an estimated eventual cost of $10 billion. Vice President Albert Gore, a key promoter, has labeled this enterprise the National Information Infrastructure. A recent comprehensive report on the information highway notes that no two educators, technologists, or other telecommunications experts define the term the same way, or "agree on exactly how [its] development will affect education."[19] This information "hypeway" is but the latest, and perhaps the most costly—or lucrative, depending on where one stands—bill of goods sold to the schools in the name of a computer-based educational revolution.

Technology is dressed up to appear as the perfect solution to the latest educational fashion.

> **Lesson 2:** Corporate strategies for the marketing of computer-based education are chameleon-like, changing their colors to meet the needs of every new educational fad or government invitation or technological innovation that comes along.

As we have seen, companies marketing computer-based education have typically invested themselves in a rapid series of strategic overhauls in attempting to attain access into schools. Technology is dressed up in one guise after another in order to appear as the perfect solution to the latest educational fashion, whether it be remediation, accountability, individualized instruction, or special education. Most recently, this list of fashions has come to include school restructuring and authentic assessment, as firms stumble over themselves to demonstrate that computers are the perfect solution both to portfolio assessment strategies and to the overall reinventing of school organization.

When Bush's New American Schools Development Corporation, for example, announced the winners in its multimillion dollar competition to design new schools for the twenty-first century, "the big winner," according to the editors of *Educational Technology*, "was technology."[20] Computers, one reads again and again, are critical to restructuring schools. Andrew Molnar, the central figure in the NSF's support of computer-based education over three decades, announced in a recent address: "The current crisis in education and the current desire to restructure education offers us a 'window of opportunity.' It is now time to begin building a new, national infrastructure to make computing available to all."[21] Meanwhile, the nationwide movement toward authentic, portfolio-type assessments of children's progress has been targeted as another set of problems for which the computer is the perfect solution.[22] Restructuring and assessment are among the latest examples of how computer-based technology is marketed to the education community.

A recent report on educational technology, released in April 1995 by the Office of Technology Assessment, recounts how "the advice of experts in education technology has changed dramatically over the past decade."[23] In 1983, teachers were told to use computers to teach students programming in BASIC, because "it's the language that comes with your computer." In 1984, they were told to teach programming in LOGO in order to "teach students to think, not just to program." In 1986, they were told to use integrated drill-and-practice systems in computer labs to "individualize instruction and increase test scores." In 1988, they were told to teach word processing, because children should "use computers as tools like adults do." In 1990, they were told to teach with curriculum-specific tools such as science simulations, history databases, and data probes, in order to "integrate the computers into the existing curriculum." In 1992 they were told to teach hypertext multimedia programming because "students learn best by creating products for an audience." And in 1994, they were told to teach with Internet telecommunications in order to "let students be part of the real world." These rapid-fire changes in the prevailing wisdom of educational technology experts indicate that even after thirty years, the implementation of computer-based technology in education is at a highly experimental stage, despite billions spent annually. More importantly, they reflect a powerful, unrelenting pressure from corporate marketers and their education allies to get the computers into schools, one way or another.

Even after thirty years, the implementation of computer-based technology in education is highly experimental.

Microsoft's chairman Bill Gates was also the original promoter of CD-ROM multimedia in the late 1980s, triggering another corporate, competitive frenzy that has found its way to the schoolhouse door in the past few years. Competition among computer hardware makers and software publishers has driven firm after firm to leap into a consumer and school CD-ROM market that is in fact "mainly wishful thinking" rather than a real market based on consumer demand.[24] Corporate marketers have thrust CD-ROM capabilities built into personal computers on school and home consumers, not because an abundance of quality CD-ROM-based multimedia software exists or because CD-ROM technology is the wave of the future, but rather, because companies see the CD-ROM market as a competitive strategy. According to one executive, it is "a low-risk way to practice making content for interactive television (ITV)" on the information highway.[25]

The expansion into the schools of the information highway serves the interests of industry rather than the interests of education.

Corporate executives admit that CD-ROM technology and software is merely a "bridge technology," a stopgap on the way to the information highway: "CD-ROMs are the Quonset hut of media—temporary structures that have a way of becoming permanent."[26] Explains one executive, "You're not going to get to participate in ITV unless you get in early. . . . It's a warm-up."[27] "Companies view CD-ROM as a competitive advantage," says one industry observer, and this competition to position the firm for the information highway has resulted in untold quantities of CD-ROM drives and "a proliferation of ill-conceived and sloppily executed CD-ROM [software]" being discounted or given away to schools in the wake of "seller-fed hysteria."[28] Once again, crazed competition, not educational benefit or consumer demand or even careful business sense, is what is driving such technologies into an already bewildered school market.

> **Lesson 3:** Computer-based education is more about using schools and the education market in the service of technological product development and profits than it is about using technology in the service of education, schools, and students.

Much of the school experimentation with computer-based education in the 1950s and 1960s was only marginally about education. The computer industry and military agencies were aggressively pursuing research in human-computer interaction, interface design, and automated tutoring systems for technical training. So-called educational research in this area, therefore, was in fact serving purposes very far afield from education, some of which, one might even argue, were antithetical to the needs of education. This is true in the 1990s as well, with the expansion into the schools of the information highway, which arguably serves the interests of the entertainment/

telecommunications industry rather than the needs or interests of education.

The latest merger frenzy now dominating the mad dash to the information superhighway is surprisingly reminiscent of the flurry of mergers between "hardware" and "software" companies that took place in the mid 1960s. A recent article offers a scorecard:

> MCI and News Corp, US West and Time Warner, Creative Artists Agency and Nynex, Bell Atlantic and Pacific Telesis, Walt Disney and three other Baby Bells. There seems to be no end in sight to the coupling of the entertainment and communications giants. . . . The reason for the scramble to do a deal? The cable and phone companies are the infrastructure guys . . . [and] the entertainment companies have the content needed to fill those pipelines.[29]

In other words, we're seeing the convergence of hardware and software all over again. Only this time education is a mere afterthought, or more accurately, a niche in the coming interactive media deluge that will someday, it is widely believed, flow through the pipelines of the information superhighway.

Educational materials and instruction are now viewed by corporate America as one small category of "software" or "content" on the information superhighway, alongside computer games, electronic mail and bulletin boards, news, books, magazines, movies, pornography, television shows, interactive TV, consumer advertising, gambling, and home shopping capabilities. The target for all these products is vast: the apparently limitless market for entertainment and other services pumped to homes and institutions along the information superhighway. And the motivations behind these latest corporate mega-ventures are even less noble or honorable than those driving the mergers into education in the '60s. Here, there is not even a hint of social responsibility or philanthropy; these firms do not even pretend to be saving schools, or the poor or the underprivileged. In fact, they have had to be goaded by the federal administration into linking their telecommunications to the schools, since the education market is but a mere speck in their grandiose, and unashamedly greed-inspired, visions.

As in the 1960s, government leaders, and prominent education leaders as well, champion and encourage the latest technological assault on schools, decrying the woeful lack of an electronic infrastructure that, according to the chairman of the Federal

Communications Commission, keeps students "locked up in education cells."[30] Just as in the 1960s, Gore's promotion of a National Information Infrastructure linking schools to the Information Highway has attempted to "alert . . . the telecommunications industry to a huge new market."[31] And just as in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, the FCC chairman has argued that "networks into the classroom [will] be the greatest technological advance since the printing press."[32] His fantasy is that "from their individual classrooms, teachers must be able to send and receive faxes, upload and download information from communications satellites, have access to interactive television programming, communicate with parents at home over telephone lines, and join virtual communities of their colleagues on-line."[33]

Americans spent $340 billion on entertainment in 1993, compared with $270 billion spent on elementary and secondary education.

Despite these high-sounding prognostications (however removed from the real concerns of teachers), such communication capabilities are not what the information highway is actually all about. From the perspective of the corporate giants investing the billions to make it a reality, it's about entertainment—period—and education will perforce become steadily subsumed within entertainment when and if the information becomes reality. "What's clear," notes one Bell Atlantic executive, "is [that] this is not so much an info highway, but an entertainment highway."[34] The reason is obvious to Bell Atlantic's CEO Ray Smith, who explained, when asked why the telecommunications giant was betting the company on interactive television and other interactive entertainment media: "Why . . .? Because that's where the people are."[35] And, indeed, Americans spent about $340 billion on entertainment in 1993, compared with $270 billion spent on elementary and secondary education, both public and private.[36]

In point of fact, the entertainment industry, rapidly merging with the telecommunications industry in the production and delivery of interactive media products along the superhighway, is the real engine of technological development in the 1990s, just as the military was its prime mover during former decades. According to the chairman of Silicon Graphics, a supplier of technology and software to the entertainment industry, "The entertainment industry is now the driving force for new technology, as defense used to be."[37] And just as development of defense technology in computer-based instruction and human-computer interaction shaped the very first computer-based forays into the schools, now the technological visions of the entertainment/telecommunications industry are shaping the latest computer-based "classrooms of the future," as technologies developed for movies, interactive games, and theme parks are "repurposed"[38] for delivery to the classroom. And educators, according to *Education Week*, are, "at best, peripheral players in the game."[39]

NOTES

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21. Andrew R. Molnar, "Computers in Education: A Historical Perspective of the Unfinished Task," unpublished speech, National Science Foundation, n.d., p. 10.

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Section 3

Learning vs. Working: Students as Workers—and as Future Employees

Our language both reflects and contributes to the way we think. A number of linguists and philosophers have made that point, emphasizing that the metaphors we use are far from neutral tools of communication. Not only do we rely on these metaphors unthinkingly, but sometimes we're not even aware that our way of describing something is, in fact, metaphorical. A case in point is the tendency to talk about what students are doing in school as "work." The baggage carried by this terminology is substantial, as Hermine H. Marshall lucidly explains, seeing as how working and learning are two entirely different things. To construe the latter as the former has profoundly disturbing implications. And it is not much different to construe the students themselves as "workers," which even some relatively forward-thinking educators have begun to do.

In my own contribution to this section, I try to indicate that a business metaphor or model is no less problematic just because a particular approach to business is relatively enlightened. We might concede that "quality management," following the work of the late W. Edwards Deming, is superior to other kinds of management. But the relevant question is whether any kind of management technique—or talk of customers and suppliers—is appropriate for the classroom. After this article was published, I learned that Deming himself was far more reasonable than many Demingites: at a March 1993 seminar in Detroit, presumably in response to a question, he growled, "We don't have customers in education. Don't forget your horse sense."[1]

Whether the model of management is progressive or traditional, whether the method of gaining influence is through an advertisement posing as a lesson plan or a report urging legislators to emphasize standardized test preparation rather than student-led discovery, corporations have always seen schools as instruments for securing their own social and economic ends. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, in their 1976 classic *Schooling in Capitalist America*, provide a broader context in which to understand the issues addressed by our other contributors. Schools, they observe, typically socialize children to obey authority, to expect to be controlled with rewards and punishments for persevering at tasks they are compelled to complete. This is precisely the mindset that prepares students to take their place in our economic system—and thus to perpetuate rather than challenge that system. It is not a coincidence that certain economic interests are served by the hidden curriculum of our schools. Even if an employer never finds out what grades were given to a student, for example, the process of grading has already served its purpose.

More concretely, we might well ask whose interests are really served by the school-to-work movement that is now much in vogue. Hannah Finan Roditi, who has an M. B. A. from Harvard and some experience with an organization called Jobs for the Future, casts a skeptical eye on the real purposes—and the real beneficiaries—of youth apprenticeship programs.

NOTE

1. Quoted by Maurice Holt, "Why Deming and OBE Don't Mix," *Educational Leadership*, September 1994, p. 85.

Beyond the Workplace Metaphor: The Classroom as a Learning Setting

by Hermine H. Marshall

Metaphors are so ubiquitous in our everyday language that we rarely pay attention to the metaphors we use when we describe or think about what happens in classrooms. Nevertheless, these metaphors shape our understanding of classroom processes. Perhaps the metaphor that is most frequently used to depict what goes on in classrooms is that of a workplace, usually a factory-type workplace. Classrooms are commonly conceptualized as work settings where student/workers are supervised by teacher/managers. In fact, the workplace metaphor so pervades our thinking about classrooms that we hardly notice this root metaphor when teachers talk about "homework" or "seatwork" or tell their students to "get back to work" or grade them on "work habits." Teacher I,[1] who is an example of a teacher who has established a "work-oriented" classroom, commonly reminded students about her expectations with comments such as, "It is standard procedure to walk in and work on your math."

Research on classroom processes is often conducted based on a workplace metaphor as well. Researchers frequently frame their research questions, design their instruments, and interpret the results to reflect this metaphor. In some instances, this strategy has produced useful results. However, researchers and educators have often overlooked the limitations of viewing the classroom in this way. Conversely, we have just begun to examine the potential ben-

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Marshall, H. H. (1990). "Beyond the Workplace Metaphor: The Classroom as a Learning Setting," from *Theory Into Practice* 29(2): 94–101. (Theme issue on "Metaphors We Learn By"). Copyright 1990, College of Education, The Ohio State University. Reprinted with permission.

efits of conceptualizing the classroom instead as a learning setting (Marshall, 1988b). Some teachers, like Teacher K, have been able to establish a "learning-oriented" classroom rather than a work-oriented classroom. Teacher K challenges students to learn, rather than just do their work, and emphasizes the importance of thinking before responding.

This article centers on questions of how the metaphors we use to conceptualize classrooms affect practice as well as research. We consider how altering our metaphor may lead to different insights into classroom processes and ultimately to improvements in educational practice. To demonstrate where the workplace metaphor may be useful and where it may limit our understanding of classroom processes, two areas of classroom research that commonly use this metaphor are described. Other examples can be found in Marshall (1988b). Problems stemming from viewing classrooms within the workplace metaphor are then discussed.

Next, I begin to develop a conceptualization of the classroom as a learning place by identifying qualities unique to learning settings as differentiated from work and play settings. Clues for developing this conceptualization are derived from cognitive and social constructivist views of learning as well as from research on work-oriented and learning-oriented classrooms. Teacher I and Teacher K, two fifth-grade teachers who organize their classrooms with a work orientation and a learning orientation, are examples taken from this research. Finally, I describe the implications of using a "learning place" metaphor for teacher education, for curriculum, and for the role of the student.

THE WORKPLACE METAPHOR IN CLASSROOM RESEARCH

Classroom Management

In a review of research on classroom management, Doyle (1986) indicates that "life in classrooms begins with the creation of a work system" (p. 413). He describes promoting order and learning as intertwined tasks. Research is cited that supports this view. For example, in classrooms where teachers are "effective managers," students are more likely to conform to the role of student and "do work properly and well" (Blumenfeld, Hamilton, Bossert, Wessels, and Meece 1983, p. 188).

Doyle's (1986) review suggests that classrooms where the organization is complex have greater need for overt management and control. However, Cohen and her associates (Cohen, Intili, and Robbins 1979; Cohen and Lotan 1990) take issue with this point. They focus on classrooms that are organized so that small groups of students use a variety of materials and procedures for high level conceptual learning. They argue that when complex instructional strategies are required—as in these classrooms—performance improves if the teacher is able to delegate authority rather than attempt to implement direct supervision. Direct supervision is more appropriate to simpler routine tasks of the assembly-line variety.

Few opportunities are provided in classroom work systems for students to engage in autonomous learning.

It may be that Doyle concluded that complex tasks need more control because he had conceptualized the classroom along an assembly-line model even where the tasks were more complicated than simple factory work. More recently, Doyle (1988) has recognized some of the limitations of the workplace metaphor. He has pointed out that few opportunities are provided in classroom work systems for students to engage in autonomous learning and to struggle with meaning.

The fruitfulness of the workplace metaphor in analyzing classroom management may thus depend in part on the match between what is happening in the particular classrooms and the type of workplace model. Where students are pursuing complex rather than rote tasks in a small group rather than in a whole class or individualized structure, the factory model of work no longer holds. In some ways, a model where the teacher is an executive (Berliner 1983, 1990), though still referring to the workplace, may be more appropriate.

Motivation

Research on motivation has also often been based on the workplace metaphor. This is particularly true of motivational research that reflects the behaviorist viewpoint. According to the behaviorist view, workers/students are "paid" (rewarded or praised) for their academic products or performance (cf. Doyle 1979). Students, like those in Teacher I's classroom, may do their work to obtain rewards or avoid "bench time at recess." However, whether they have actually learned anything more than how to repeat a rote answer or quickly fill a worksheet may be called into question. This is illustrated by the first grader who said, "I did it, but I don't know what it means" (Anderson, Brubaker, Alleman-Brooks, and Duff 1985, p. 132). In this instance, like many others, the learning purpose of the task was lost.

Furthermore, external rewards often actually decrease students' interest in tasks they had previously preferred (Lepper and Greene 1978). Brophy's (1981) analysis of the effect of praise in classrooms, too, casts doubt on the effectiveness of this external reinforcer in classroom settings. These research reviews thus raise questions about the usefulness of the workplace metaphor, with its dependence on external rewards, in considering motivation for *learning* rather than for performing or producing products.

The workplace metaphor overlooks the importance of continuing motivation to learn.

The workplace metaphor overlooks the importance of continuing motivation to learn for the benefit of the individual's own self-development (Brophy 1983), rather than for an external reward. In contrast to relying on external sources of motivation, teachers who establish a learning orientation are more likely to emphasize sources of motivation that are related to students' own needs and interests. To introduce a math lesson, for example, Teacher K asked her students to generate ideas about when they might have the need to estimate.

PROBLEMS STEMMING FROM CONCEPTUAL LENSES

Because of the pervasiveness of the workplace metaphor in describing classrooms in our culture, it is difficult to recognize that viewing classrooms through this conceptual lens may limit our understanding. Although the workplace metaphor may be useful when it moves beyond an assembly-line model and considers the teacher as executive, several problems still surround its use.

Socialization

The first of these problems centers on a seemingly circular process, akin to self-fulfilling prophecies: Many teachers and researchers operate under the assumption that classrooms are workplaces similar to factories. In fact, teachers as well as researchers have generally been socialized in classrooms that operate as if their goals were to do "work." Investigators devise research strategies that reflect the classroom as a workplace (e.g., LeCompte 1978). Because most teachers were trained under the assumption that students come to school to work, many attempt to organize and manage their classrooms to be efficient workplaces.

Many teachers operate under the assumption that classrooms are workplaces similar to factories.

Thus, because of researchers' and teachers' own socialization, researchers observe and make conclusions about classrooms as workplaces. The rare classroom that does not entirely fit the model is either ignored, discounted as atypical, or lost in calculating the mean. Conclusions from these studies are translated into recommendations for teachers on how best to establish the classroom as a setting where work is accomplished. And so the system is perpetuated. Without the neo-proverbial person from Mars, it is difficult to step outside our cultural lenses and attempt to discover what it is about classrooms that may make them learning places as distinguished from workplaces.

Work as Drudgery

Second, variations in the meaning of the term work itself further complicate the impact of the metaphor. "Working hard" may mean satisfaction to some people but drudgery to others. When teachers ask students to "work harder," they may believe they are simply asking students to exert sustained effort to accomplish a difficult assignment. However, students may interpret the word work to mean drudgery that has little benefit to them. The message to exert effort to *learn* for the student's own benefit and self-development rather than for the sake of the teacher seems difficult to convey and understand if it is stated in terms of work.

Learning-oriented teachers may have developed other strategies to accomplish this goal. For example, Teacher K was able to cajole some of her students who were having difficulty subtracting decimals into trying harder by challenging them to think and by linking her lesson to something they already knew rather than asking them to work harder. "Adding decimals is really tough," she said. "Do you believe me? You know how to add money."

Work Versus Play Versus Learning

Third, work is often considered the opposite of play. Fernie (1988), for example, points out the discontinuity between preschool where play is emphasized and public school where work is the major construct. Even at kindergarten, children themselves have a sense of what is work and what is play (King 1979; Paley 1984).

The contrast between work and play has usually been used to emphasize the advantages of making classrooms more work-like (e.g., Brophy 1983; Cohen 1986). Teacher I redirected students who were off task with reminders of "It is not play time." Researchers and educators have overlooked the possibility that both preschool and public school classrooms might be or might become learning settings where the primary goal is learning rather than either work or play.

Lack of Meaningful Learning

Finally, metaphors "set" or structure both the way classroom problems are perceived and the solutions that are proposed (cf. Schön 1979). For example, if classrooms are seen as workplaces, many people believe that their "productivity" can be improved by rewarding greater efficiency and better products (higher test scores). The solution suggested by this metaphor, however, disregards whether what is produced is meaningful learning.

For some teachers, meaningful learning seems to be secondary to maintaining the work system. For example, in a study of classroom management (Carter 1986), one junior high school teacher who was categorized as an effective manager often kept up the pace of the class through choral repetitions of concepts or rules. On one occasion, when a student was unable to recall the correct category for the verb *is*, she had the class chant with her "'Is is always a verb, repeat. Is is always a verb, repeat . . .' until she appeared satisfied that they would remember" (p. 21). When a student was asked later in the year to identify the part of speech for is, he replied, "'Is is always a verb repeat'."

Teachers like this one often assume that if students are kept on task and do their "work," learning will occur automatically. Teacher I implied this when she said, "You have a language sheet in front of you. Do the first side in fifteen minutes—done! Then we will have music." Teachers sometimes fail to give sufficient attention to what is learned. When students are asked why they are doing an assignment, they generally respond in terms of external forces ("so I can go out to recess" or "because the teacher said to") rather than in terms of what they will learn.

THE CLASSROOM AS A LEARNING PLACE

We may discover clues for a conceptualization of classrooms that emphasizes learning rather than work in three sources: (a) cognitive views of learning, (b) social constructivist perspectives on learning, and (c) recent classroom research. Qualities suggested by these sources help us identify essential characteristics of learning-oriented classrooms as differentiated from work-oriented or play settings.

The workplace model emphasizes the end-product of academic work.

Cognitive Views of Learning

Cognitive views of learning provide one source of clues about classrooms where meaningful learning is the primary emphasis. Cognitive views of learning differ in several respects from the behaviorist conception that is associated with the workplace metaphor (see Shuell 1986, for a review). First, according to the cognitive perspective, the learner is seen as playing an active role in the process of constructing knowledge rather than reacting to external forces (e.g., reinforcement). Focus is therefore on processes within the individual that are involved in learning (e.g., relating new information to what is already known, planning, strategies for obtaining feedback). That is, a cognitive perspective highlights those thought processes, perceptions, and understandings of the task that facilitate learning itself (see Wittrock 1986, for a review)—in contrast to the workplace model that emphasizes the end-product of academic work.

Second, because this view suggests that learning consists of an individual actively constructing and restructuring knowledge and skills (or schema) in complex networks of increasing conceptual consistency—rather than discrete facts and skills being "stamped in" from external sources and to gain an external reward—the role of the teacher is different from that of manager. The teacher's role includes diagnosing students' misconceptions and current levels of thinking, creating conceptual conflict, and presenting content so as to guide students toward greater conceptual consistency (Vosniadou and Brewer 1987). Teachers also need to assess areas or zones where students are ready to learn based on such factors as prior knowledge and interest or benefits to the individual. Learning tasks are analyzed in relation to the child's current level of development as well as in terms of the cognitive processes involved so that teachers can use appropriate instructional techniques to support learning.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST VIEWS

Social constructivist views differ from the cognitive perspective in several ways that provide additional clues about qualities essential in establishing classrooms as learning settings. These differences center on the emphasis placed on the social context of learning. Whereas cognitive views of learning suggest that the *learner* constructs knowledge—although often with the guidance of an expert—social constructivists describe how the *social context* influences this construction. According to a social constructivist framework, learning and thinking are "situated in physical and social contexts" rather than occurring solely in an individual's mind (e.g., Greeno 1989, p. 135).

A social constructivist conception implies that we need to focus on the social context within which academic tasks are presented and within which academic cognitions are constructed. For example, the social context of the classroom conveys messages about what counts as learning, such as whether the product or the process is important. Teachers and students construct this context through their interactions with each other and within and around lessons (Green, Weade, and Graham 1988). The meaning of lessons and the goals of school are constructed as well through opportunities provided and the interactions between the individuals in these contexts. For example, when teachers present writing lessons as worksheets to complete, the interactions surrounding the task convey a different message about learning and writing than when teachers introduce writing lessons as avenues for the expression and construction of new ideas.

The way teachers respond to students' attempts at completing tasks also influences how students interpret tasks and consequently what they learn. In work-oriented classrooms, error-free products are what counts as learning. This message was conveyed, for example, as Teacher I announced the number wrong as she returned math papers. On the other hand, in classrooms where the learning process is emphasized, teachers help students recognize that errors can be the basis for new learning. Teacher K lets students know that mistakes are "OK" with comments such as "Don't change it [wrong answer] 'cause we can figure out what went wrong" and "I'm not interested in how many you got wrong; I'm interested in if I can help you [learn]."

Social constructivist views also suggest that we attend to the part played in the creation of the social context by how we group students for learning. Although individuals can learn without the aid of others, collaborative social interaction provides a number of benefits. First, when students learn in groups, the cognitive functions and multiple roles required to carry out cognitive tasks can be displayed by different individuals and modeled for others to learn (A. Brown and Reeve 1987). Second, group members may be able to elicit and confront misconceptions and ineffective strategies that an individual teacher is unable to accomplish in a whole class setting. Third, group members appear to have a "synergistic" effect on insights and problem solutions (J. Brown, Collins, and Duguid 1989). Furthermore, collaborative groups create group norms where effort and intention to learn are valued, thereby enhancing learners' motivation to learn (Ames and Ames 1984).

The emphasis on context also suggests that for meaningful learning to occur, teachers need to provide "authentic activities" (J. Brown et al. 1989) or at least link classroom tasks to the real world—rather than assign decontextualized tasks. "Authentic activities" include ways that practitioners, such as mathematicians or historians, look at the world as well as ways that experienced readers derive meaning from context or use a dictionary when confronted with an unknown word, rather than solely learning a list of vocabulary words out of context.

Classroom Research

A third source of clues about classrooms that might be categorized as learning settings derives from recent classroom research. Secondary analyses of classroom transcripts revealed several teachers who seemed to implement a learning orientation as well as those who appeared to implement a work orientation (Marshall 1987a, 1987b, 1988a). Learning-oriented teachers were identified by their use of statements emphasizing thinking and the challenge of learning. For students in these classrooms, comments like "Read for a challenge?" and "Think first; hands down; think for five seconds" conveyed a message about what was important in the classroom. These teachers underscored the benefits of learning rather than external rewards for academic performance.

Learning-oriented teachers more frequently introduced lessons by stating reasons for engaging in the learning task that were related to processes within the individual, such as thinking, personal relevance, or purpose (e.g., buying Campfire Girl cookies). They also encouraged student responsibility for learning and evaluating their own work. Teacher K said to one student, "I know you have beautiful handwriting when you want. Let me ask you, are you proud of it? . . . Don't turn it in unless you're proud of it."

Learning-oriented teachers more frequently introduced lessons by stating reasons for engaging in the learning task.

In addition to the emphasis on thinking, the challenge of learning, and the encouragement of student responsibility, common themes in these learning-oriented classrooms included an emphasis on (a) the purpose of school and the assignments as learning, (b) peer helping, (c) supportiveness of errors as a part of the learning process, (d) acceptance of individual differences, (e) positive expectations, and (f) preventive management (see Marshall 1988b for an elaboration of these themes). Similar themes have been found in an analysis of fifth grade science teachers who support students' understanding and mastery (Meece, Blumenfeld, and Puro 1989).

QUALITIES OF LEARNING SETTINGS

Based on clues from these three sources, we can begin to postulate essential qualities of learning settings as distinguished from work[2] and play settings. Three essential qualities are highlighted here and displayed in Table 1. Other characteristics that may differentiate between these settings are described in Marshall (1988b). Additional characteristics may be added as the model is expanded.

Goals

The first quality that distinguishes learning settings from work and play settings is the major goal of each setting. The major goal in learning settings is learning, that is, the acquisition or construction of knowledge or skills that are of benefit to the learner in terms of self-development or increased quality of life (Brophy 1983). Self-development is considered here to include the development of au-

Table 1
Some Qualities of Learning, Work, and Play Settings

Qualities	Learning	Work	Play
Goal	Learning Process Self-development Autonomous learners	Product Performance	Enjoyment
Source of satisfaction	Pride Self-development Opportunity for continued learning	Money Status	Pleasure
Basis & purpose for authority	Expertise to be transferred Support construction of knowledge	Expertise, status maintained Assure efficient production	Safety

Note: The qualities of the work setting listed here are those of the factory type of work setting commonly referred to when this metaphor is used.

tonomous learners who possess the skills and knowledge necessary to work productively and participate as citizens.

Although learning may occur in work or play settings, learning is usually an unintended consequence of these settings. In contrast, the goal in a work setting is to produce a tangible, externally visible product or service for the benefit (profit) of the employer rather than the worker. The goals in play or recreational settings are enjoyment and relaxation.

In addition, the goal in learning settings centers on the process rather than the product. As part of this process, errors are seen as evidence of misconceptions and can be a source of further learning, as we have seen. In contrast, in work settings, errors are costly and evidence of inefficiency.

The tangible outcomes of learning are sometimes mistakenly considered the goals of learning.

We should note, however, that the tangible outcomes of the learning process are sometimes mistakenly considered the goals of learning. Because learning is an internal process, evidence that learning has actually occurred is often difficult to provide. Tangible outcomes, such as composition or a page of calculations, are sometimes produced in the course of learning. However, this output is not the primary goal in learning settings in the same way that products are the primary goal in work settings. One might even consider these results of the learning process as "by-products." As illustrated by the first grader quoted earlier, who finished his assignment without knowing what it meant, students can perform or produce a product without actually learning.

Satisfaction

The second major difference between learning settings and work and play settings concerns the source of satisfaction. In some cases, feelings of satisfaction in learning settings stem from the pride and self-development resulting from having increased one's knowledge. In other cases, satisfaction comes from new opportunities that this additional knowledge provides. For example, learning prerequisite skills allows students to tackle new tasks and eventually become productive and effective members of society. In these cases, skills and knowledge are learned because they are instrumental for coping with the demands of society and consequently of benefit to the learner.

In contrast, satisfaction in work settings—particularly in factory-type settings—may result from monetary rewards and/or increased status. Satisfaction is rarely inherent in the work itself as it is in learning settings and in craft or professional work. In most recreational settings, satisfaction or pleasure is inherent in the enjoyment and relaxation related to the immediate and long-term benefit to the individual.

The teacher must share control of the learning process with a learner.

Authority Relationships

A third quality distinguishing learning from work and play settings concerns the basis for role relationships. Authority relationships in learning settings are less hierarchical than those in many work settings. These relationships are based on (a) the teacher's expertise and knowledge to be shared or transferred, together with her or his ability to support learners in the acquisition or construction of knowledge, in conjunction with (b) the learner's role as an active constructor of knowledge.

The authority figure must be authoritative rather than authoritarian. This implies that the authority figure in learning settings must have both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman 1986), with the pedagogical knowledge based on understanding the cognitive and social processes through which learners construct knowledge. As a result, teachers must be able to diagnose learners' present level of development and knowledge, analyze learning materials for the cognitive processes and developmental level required, select authentic and developmentally appropriate activities, structure the environment for collaborative learning, and search for ways to help students continue constructing their own knowledge.

The teacher must share control of the learning process with a learner who plays an active part in the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers have some control over the opportunities they provide for students to learn. However, students can, in blatant or subtle ways, avoid learning and thereby exert control over their own learning. For young children who are new to the learning setting or for children who have become alienated from learning, therefore, the role of the teacher may initially need to include that of supervisor or protector of the learning purpose of the environment, along with inspiring the desire to learn.

Teachers need to be more than executives enabling students to learn.

In contrast, authority relationships in most work settings are based on the status and expertise held (not transferred) by the manager or executive. The major role of the authority figure in most workplaces is to assure efficient production. In this role, the authority figure has recourse to sanctions to control workers that are unavailable to teachers (e.g., dismissal). If the expertise of the executive includes problem solving and enabling others to perform well—as Berliner (1983, 1990) suggests—authority relationships may come closer to those in learning settings. In those recreational settings that do not include a learning purpose (such as competitive sports), authority relationships may be nonexistent or mainly to maintain safety.

IMPLICATIONS

If we broaden our conceptualization of classrooms beyond a work-centered perspective to include the classroom as a learning setting, we may expand our views about teaching strategies conducive to learning. This notion of the classroom as a learning place, therefore, has implications for teacher education, for curriculum development, and for the socialization of students.

To achieve the potential advantages of this view of classrooms, changes need to be made in teacher preparation programs so that teachers will see themselves and will be seen as experts with knowledge to share rather than primarily as classroom managers. Teachers need to be more than executives enabling students to learn. Teachers need firm knowledge of how students construct their own knowledge within the dynamic social context of the classroom and how to support this type of meaningful learning through diagnosing the learner's developmental level and analyzing learning materials in relation to these levels. They require a greater range of knowledge of general and specific learning strategies to structure the environment with a learning purpose and help students learn (e.g., Weinstein and Mayer 1986), not just to keep them working.

If classrooms are thought of as learning places where goals include the self-development of autonomous learners and where methods build on cognitive and social constructivist perspective, changes in the curriculum as well as in methods of teaching need to be made. Reliance needs to shift from rewards for completing decontextualized tasks that emphasize proper procedures to problem situations that are authentic and meaningful to students. Students need the opportunity to express concepts in alternative ways depending on their developmental level (see Cobb 1988 for examples). Some examples of instruction have recently been described that emphasize the cognitive and collaborative processes involved in the construction of knowledge in areas such as math (e.g., Lampert 1986; Peterson, Fennema, and Carpenter in press) and writing (e.g., Graves 1983).

Finally, changes need to be made in the process of socializing children into the role of student so that they will be able to see that the purpose of schooling is learning rather than work. They need to learn that academic tasks benefit their own self-development as well as society. Socialization would focus on the role of student as learner and helper, often in a collaborative setting, rather than student as worker. With this learning emphasis and rationale, rather than the work-play dichotomy, perhaps students will complete their assignments because they take pride in what they learn instead of doing their "work so they can go out to play."

NOTES

The model presented here is expanded from one described in Marshall (1988b).

1. The examples cited in this article are drawn from a series of studies concerning the motivational orientations of teachers (Marshall 1987a, 1987b, 1988a).

2. The characteristics of work settings listed here refer more to the factory-type work setting reflecting the most common use of the metaphor.

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The Littlest Customers: TQM Goes to School

by Alfie Kohn

Every few years a new idea captures the imagination of educators. The journals are filled with breathless accounts of its importance, a cadre of consultants materializes to offer workshops, and a new vocabulary insinuates itself into discussions of familiar topics. The idea that currently fits that description is Total Quality Management (TQM), based on the work of the renowned statistical consultant W. Edwards Deming in corporate settings.[1]

Because I am raising concerns about the application of TQM to schools, I should begin by acknowledging not only my admiration for Deming but also my involvement with the movement he helped to set into motion. Some of my own writing is apparently regarded as relevant in these circles, and I have been invited to lecture at a number of Quality conferences, as well as to exchange ideas with Deming as part of a videotape series on his work. I mention these things only by way of emphasizing that I have some connection to the field I am discussing.

Not only am I enthusiastic about TQM in a business context, but I believe that many of its underlying values resonate with some of the best work in educational theory. Deming and his followers offer an essentially positive view of human nature, emphasizing people's fundamental desire to learn and challenge themselves. TQM advocates promote democratic environments and shared decision making. They stress the benefits of cooperation and the destructive consequences of competition. They insist that a climate of trust must replace one based on fear. And they urge the abolition of systems of rating, ranking, and behavioral manipulation, including grades.

"Turning Learning into a Business: Concerns about Total Quality" by Alfie Kohn, from *Educational Leadership*, September 1993, pp. 58–61. © 1993 by Alfie Kohn. Reprinted with permission.

While none of these ideas is new to education—indeed, each has been articulated by a variety of educational writers over the decades—we should be pleased to see them corroborated by people from other fields. But pointing out parallels in passing is very different from what is happening with TQM. Educators are attempting to transplant a model native to the business world, along with its methods and metaphors, to the classroom.

A MARKETPLACE MODEL IN THE CLASSROOM

Part of the problem, to be sure, is that some educators waving the Quality banner have either misunderstood Deming's work or drawn from it selectively to lend credibility to their own objectives. If TQM offers any imperative to schools, it is the need to abolish standardized tests (Holt 1993) and grades (Deming 1991). Yet higher test scores are sometimes cited by self-styled proponents of TQM as the measure of their success at transforming a school or district (McLeod et al. 1992, Schmoker and Wilson 1993)—or even used as the basis for redesigning the curriculum (Abernethy and Serfass 1992). Likewise, there is reason to believe that the abolition of grades, admittedly a difficult defeat, is not even on the agenda of many champions of Quality. (Some of them have moved to allow students to participate in determining their own grades [AASA 1992] but seem to regard this modification of current practice as sufficient.) Moreover, the use of extrinsic motivators appears to be widespread among those who invoke Deming's name.

Educators are attempting to transplant a model native to the business world to the classroom.

But my complaint goes deeper than a failure to understand the implications of Deming's ideas or to implement them properly. I believe that *a marketplace model, even correctly applied, does not belong in the classroom.*[2]

The difference between two management approaches (old and new, top-down and participative, Taylor and Deming) is less significant than the difference between *any* method for managing workers and what happens in classrooms.

Notwithstanding Deming's admonition to eliminate slogans and exhortations, some articles about TQM and education consist of just that: a string of shibboleths about systems theory, profound knowledge, the need for vision and leadership, and so on. Of course, the repetition of favored phrases tells us nothing about how to make meaningful change, but at least no one will disapprove. By contrast, there is cause for grave concern when we come across pointed assertions that "quality is achieved … by acknowledging that education is a business" (McLeod et al. 1992) or "the modern school should look … like our best high-tech companies" (David Kearns, quoted in Blankstein 1992). Likewise, when this philosophy is put into practice by enterprising teachers, the results verge on self-parody: second graders being instructed in the fine points of filling orders, pleasing customers, and turning out products to rigid specifications.

Something has gone terribly wrong here. But, again, the problem is not that proponents of Quality fail to understand Deming's work so much as that they fail to understand where that work belongs.

THE NOMENCLATURE OF THE WORKPLACE

When the process of teaching children is forced onto the Procrustean bed of management theory, it is necessary to designate an educational counterpart for each role in a business setting. Because TQM is about satisfying customers, the first order of business is to figure out who should be called the *customer* of education. Some writers nominate students. Some insist that the word is best applied to parents or other adults in the community. Some say it depends on the situation.

That it is so difficult to agree on the educational correlative to a company's customer—one who *purchases* a product—should alert us to the possibility that the question is misconceived. Attempting to answer it is about as sensible as trying to figure out which member of a family is most like a colonel and which is most like a lieutenant.

To talk about learning in terms of buying and selling not only reflects a warped view of the activity but contributes to the warping. To the best of my knowledge, only one individual has expressed misgivings in print about this use of language (see Sztajn 1992). Most educators who have addressed themselves to the topic of TQM adopt the terminology uncritically—and, in one case, even suggest that anyone who resists it is suffering from "a fear of industrial models" (Rhodes 1990b).

Other words borrowed from the manager's lexicon are no less disturbing than *customer.* Students are sometimes said to be *raw materials,* while parents are *suppliers.* USX ships steel to General Motors to be made into cars; Mom and Dad (having shed their status as customers) ship their children (ditto) to school to be processed into some other sort of commodity. Alternatively, teachers have been described as "delivering instruction" to students (Willis 1993). All of these phrases have disturbing pedagogical implications.

The deafening clash of metaphors gets louder when students are also referred to as *workers* (Bonstingl 1992, Schmoker and Wilson 1993). This locution, perhaps the most troubling of all, represents the logical conclusion of a well-established trend of seeing education as an investment. It is probably not a coincidence that the rationale for adopting TQM in particular is often couched not in terms of how students can be helped to become self-directed, lifelong learners, but rather in terms of improving corporate competitiveness in global markets (Leonard 1991, Schmoker and Wilson 1993).

Implicit in this perspective is the view of students as potential workers. But in the last few years, we have witnessed a shift to something even more ominous: a view of students as *actual* workers. Businesspeople and politicians are not the only ones who describe the activities of schoolchildren in economic terms. Albert Shanker (quoted in Perry 1988) declares that "we must start thinking of students as workers." William Glasser (1990), whose books have supported many educators in transforming schools into more humanistic places, insists that "the industrial analogy of workers and managers … is both accurate and appropriate."

Need we enumerate the respects in which the analogy is neither?

- Workers are adults. Most students are children, whose capacities and limits demand a developmentally appropriate set of strategies. Age differences not only inform what and how we teach, but also affect our response to inappropriate behavior.
- If workers are helped to acquire skills, this is intended as a way to build an effective organization; it is rarely a goal in its own right. By contrast, helping students to acquire skills, to become good learners and good people, is the very point of school.

- While it is undesirable for many reasons to manipulate workers with incentives (Kohn 1993a, b), they still have to be paid. Nothing, including grades, is analogous in a school setting.
- Most important, workers produce goods like automobiles and houses; they are hired to make things. The only thing students should be making is *meaning*. To turn the classroom into a workplace, through our practices or our parlance, is to put at risk the intellectual exploration and development that ought to be taking place there.

TEACHING BY THE NUMBERS?

What is striking about the articles and books on the application of TQM to education is their failure to address any fundamental questions about learning, per se, or, even more remarkably, curriculum. Incredibly, page after page written by educators enamored of business models typically contains not a single reference to whether the things we are teaching are worth learning—whether the curriculum is engaging and relevant to children's experiences. In fact, one influential introduction to the topic promotes TQM as "content-free, applicable to any instruction or structural reform" (AASA 1992).[3]

This is hardly the first time educators have been offered a package said to be compatible with any curriculum. That TQM takes the same approach should not be surprising, since its use in a corporate context is not dependent on what people in an organization are doing: whether a company manufactures medicine or missiles is of no consequence to consultants who talk about moving toward Quality.

At best, then, TQM offers little challenge to the curricular status quo and leaves students with the same material to learn. But if, as I suspect, TQM turns out not to be content-neutral in practice, its impact may actually be counterproductive. The premise of TQM seems to be that the trouble with organizations of all sorts, including schools, is a lack of data. Great importance is placed on the use of statistical control diagrams and other pictorial representations of quantitative information about performance. New converts to TQM frequently display examples of these tools, along with pride at having mastered them.

Is it really true that the principal problem with American classrooms is a lack of data? I think not, but we can put off this question to another day. Instead, let us consider the possible effect on the curriculum of this way of thinking. In academic social science, the questions addressed in a given discipline often seem to be selected on the basis of how well they lend themselves to the methodologies native to that field: the method drives the content. Similarly, it is entirely possible that TQM classrooms will incline toward the analysis of data and the assignment of tasks where progress can be easily quantified and analyzed. While Deming has said unequivocally that "the most important things we need to manage can't be measured" (quoted in Rhodes 1990a; also see Deming 1991), an emphasis on statistical analysis is likely to accelerate the tendency toward teaching by the numbers.

Much of what is worth learning cannot be reduced to numbers without doing violence to its substance.

There is evidence, in fact, that this is already happening. In one case, proponents of systems thinking have talked about computer simulations of the actions of Shakespeare's characters to maximize "the use of precise numbers to talk about psychological motives" (Senge and Lannon-Kim 1991). In another case, people committed to Quality have built into assessment instruments such measures as "the number of poems a student [has] memorized" (Harris and Harris 1992). David Langford, a pioneer in the field, recently dismissed "the argument that much of what happens in the classroom is intangible and hence not subject to the statistical scrutiny TQM prescribes. 'It can all be measured,' he maintains" (Willis 1993).

It was e.e. cummings who declared that "nothing measurable matters a good goddam." Even if we are not willing to go quite that far, it is hard to deny that much of what is worth learning cannot be reduced to numbers without doing violence to its substance. In fact, anyone sensitive to the tyranny of standardized testing should be just as skeptical about turning the process of children's intellectual creation and discovery into bars on a Pareto chart.

At the heart of Deming's approach is a repudiation of the use of numerical goals and mass inspection at the end of production. What we choose to quantify, and how we do so, is highly relevant within the Quality framework. But what are we to make of the assertion that "improving the system" for educators as well as managers means trying to "narrow the amount of variation within it" (Blankstein 1992)? Or that it means "removing inefficiencies" in the curriculum itself, or even worse, subjecting children to "frequent assessment of quality at every stage" (Schmoker and Wilson 1993)?

BACK TO THE GOALS OF EDUCATION

Assuming that these writers have not misinterpreted the goals of TQM, the issue once again is whether such a system is consistent with our goals as educators. If we prefer to focus on process rather than product—if efficiency is a goal incommensurate with the act of discovery—then we have reason to question the appropriateness of TQM in a classroom setting. Nor will our concerns be allayed when some of the recommendations are modified. Even if students' performance isn't construed in terms of reducing variation and even if it isn't relentlessly quantified, there is no getting around the fact that the Quality model is designed to draw attention to performance in order to improve it.

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Unfortunately, a performance focus is inherently problematic in a classroom. The work of leading motivation researchers (Ames 1992, Dweck 1986, Nicholls 1989), none of which has been mentioned by defenders of TQM's role in education, converges on a single crucial distinction concerning how to think about what happens in schools. Variously framed as "mastery vs. ability," "learning vs. performance," and "task vs. ego," the point is that there is an enormous difference between getting students to think about *what* they are doing, on the one hand, and *how well* they are doing (and therefore how good they are at doing it), on the other. The latter orientation does a great deal of harm.

Students who are overly concerned about how well they are doing may come to see learning as a means to an end and start to think that their performance, especially when they fail, is due to innate intelligence (or its absence): "I screwed up; therefore, I'm stupid." That, in turn, leads them to assume there isn't much point to trying harder next time, which means they are unlikely to improve.

This is not to say that the worth of an assignment cannot be judged. There is a time to think about whether what one has done is good, and it is important to talk with others about the results of one's work. But research is clear that getting children to become preoccupied with their performance can:

- undermine their ability to apply scientific principles to new situations (Dweck 1986);
- reduce the quality of the learning as measured on tests of creativity (Butler 1992);
- increase their fear of failure (Heyman and Dweck 1992);
- undermine their interest in what they are doing (Ryan 1982, Butler 1987); and
- lead them to choose the easiest possible task in an effort to avoid the sort of challenge that might lead to failure (Harter 1978, Elliott and Dweck 1988).

Getting students to think about grades or performance on tests is a particularly potent way to inhibit creative thinking and conceptual learning (Grolnick and Ryan 1987, Butler and Nisan 1986). But the point here is that any sort of performance orientation can be detrimental—and TQM is unavoidably based on just such an orientation.

I do not fault the theorists or practitioners of corporate management for ignorance of these and other findings, because there is no reason to expect them to have thought carefully about how children learn. But why, then, are we looking to these people for guidance on educational practices?

When someone in the business world asks me for advice, I unhesitatingly recommend the work of Deming. Educators, though, would do better to turn to Dewey. Before we jump on the bandwagon carrying another corporate model into our schools, we need to ask some hard questions about the nature and purposes of education. No one can object to "quality" as an abstract concept, but if a set of practices revolving around that word requires us to treat students as customers or workers, then we should leave management practices to managers and get on with the challenge of educating.

NOTES

1. It is worth noting that Deming pointedly distanced himself from much of what goes by the name of TQM. Nonetheless, I refer here to Deming's principles and the Quality movement inspired (if not always approved) by him more or less interchangeably. I do so for the sake of simplicity and because my concerns about using Deming's work in the classroom go well beyond the issue of whether the people citing that work are using it imprecisely.

2. Whether it belongs in any educational setting—for example, whether it is appropriate to managing the work of adults in a school or district—is a question worth pondering, but one that I will not attempt to deal with here. My concern is with teaching children.

3. In his book on quality schools, Glasser has written, "Actually, there is little wrong with the curriculum. What is wrong is our inability to persuade more than a small percentage of students to learn it well" (1990, p. 118). More recently, though, he seems to have changed his mind, declaring, "No matter how well the teachers manage them, if students do not find quality in what they are asked to do in their classes, they will not work hard enough to learn the material. The answer is not to try to make them work harder; the answer is to increase the quality of what we ask them to learn" (1992, p. 691).

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Schooling in Capitalist America

by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis

Since its inception in the United States, the public school system has been seen as a method of disciplining children in the interest of producing a properly subordinate adult population. Sometimes conscious and explicit, and at other times a natural emanation from the conditions of dominance and subordinacy prevalent in the economic sphere, the theme of social control pervades educational thought and policy. The forms of school discipline, the position of the teacher, and the moral conception of the child have all changed over the years, but the overriding objective has remained.

The most striking testimonial to the hegemony of the social-control ideology is perhaps its clear primacy even among those who opposed such obvious manifestations of the authoritarian classroom as corporal punishment and teacher-centered discussion. The most progressive of progressive educators have shared the common commitment to maintaining ultimate top-down control over the child's activities. Indeed, much of the educational experimentation of the past century can be viewed as attempting to broaden the discretion and deepen the involvement of the child while maintaining hierarchical control over the ultimate processes and outcomes of the educational encounter. The goal has been to enhance student motivation while withholding effective participation in the setting of priorities.

Hence, like the view of the child, the concept of discipline has itself changed. Two aspects of this change are particularly important. First, the once highly personalized authority of the teacher has become a part of the bureaucratic structure of the modern school. Unlike the teachers in the chaotic early nineteenth-century district schools, modern teachers exercise less personal power and rely more heavily on regulations promulgated by higher authorities. Although

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frequently prey to arbitrary intervention by parents and other community members, the nineteenth-century teacher was the boss of the classroom. The modern teacher is in a more ambiguous position. The very rules and regulations which add a patina of social authority to his or her commands at the same time rigidly circumscribe the teacher's freedom of action.

Second, the aim of discipline is no longer mere compliance: the aim is now "behavior modification." Prompt and obedient response to bureaucratically sanctioned authority is, of course, a must. But sheer coercion is out of keeping with both the modern educator's view of the child and the larger social needs for a self-controlled—not just controlled—citizenry and work force. Discipline is still the theme, but the variations more often center on the "internalization of behavioral norms," on equipping the child with a built-in supervisor than on mere obedience to external authority and material sanctions.

The repressive nature of the schooling process is nowhere more clearly revealed than in the system of grading, the most basic process of allocating rewards within the school. We will have gone some distance toward comprehending the school as it is—in going behind the educational rhetoric—if we can answer the question: Who gets what and why?

Teachers are likely to reward those who conform to and strengthen the social order of the school with higher grades and approval, and punish violators with lower grades and other forms of disapproval, independent of their respective academic and cognitive accomplishments. This fact allows us to investigate exactly what personality traits, attitudes, and behavioral attributes are facilitated by the educational encounter.

Outside of gross disobedience, one would suspect the student's exhibition of creativity and divergence of thought to be most inimical to the smooth functioning of the hierarchical classroom. For the essence of the modern educational encounter is, to use Paolo Freire's words, that teaching:

> . . . becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education. . . . The teacher teaches and the students are taught. . . . The teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the students comply. . . . The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.[1]

Others refer to this conception as the "jug and mug" approach to teaching whereby the jug fills up the mugs.

Thus the hostility of the school system to student behavior even approaching critical consciousness should be evident in the daily lives of students. Students are rewarded for exhibiting discipline, subordinacy, intellectually as opposed to emotionally oriented behavior, and hard work independent from intrinsic task motivation. Moreover, these traits are rewarded independently of any effect of "proper demeanor" on scholastic achievement.

The reward system of the school inhibits manifestations of personal capacity which threaten hierarchical authority.

Conformity to the social order of the school involves submission to a set of authority relationships which are inimical to personal growth. Instead of promoting a healthy balance among the capacity for creative autonomy, diligence, and susceptibility to social regulation, the reward system of the school inhibits those manifestations of personal capacity which threaten hierarchical authority.

We have emphasized elements of the "hidden curriculum" faced in varying degrees by all students. But schools do different things to different children. Boys and girls, blacks and whites, rich and poor are treated differently. Affluent suburban schools, working-class schools, and ghetto schools all exhibit a distinctive pattern of sanctions and rewards. Moreover, most of the discussion here has focused on high-school students. In important ways, colleges are different; and community colleges exhibit social relations of education which differ sharply from those of elite four-year institutions. In short, U.S. education is not monolithic.

Why do schools reward docility, passivity, and obedience? Why do they penalize creativity and spontaneity? Why the historical constancy of suppression and domination in an institution so central to the elevation of youth? Surely this is a glaring anomaly in terms of traditional liberal educational theory. The naive enthusiasm of the contemporary free-school movement suggests the implicit assumption that no one had ever tried to correct this situation—that the ideal of liberated education is simply a new conception which has never been tried. Even sophisticated critics, such as Charles Silberman, tend to attribute the oppressiveness of schooling to simple oversight and irrationality:

> What is mostly wrong with public schools is not due to venality or indifference or stupidity but to mindlessness. . . . It simply never occurs to more than a handful, to ask *why* they are doing what they are doing—to think seriously or deeply about the purposes or consequences of education.[2]

Yet, the history of the progressive-education movement attests to the intransigence of the educational system to "enlightened change" within the context of corporate capitalism.

We believe the available evidence indicates that the pattern of social relationships fostered in schools is hardly irrational or accidental. Rather, the structure of the educational experience is admirably suited to nurturing attitudes and behavior consonant with participation in the labor force. Particularly dramatic is the statistically verifiable congruence between the personality traits conducive to proper work performance on the job and those which are rewarded with high grades in the classroom.

The structure of the educational experience is suited to nurturing attitudes consonant with participation in the labor force.

Capitalist production, in our view, is not simply a technical process; it is also a social process. Workers are neither machines nor commodities but, rather, active human beings who participate in production with the aim of satisfying their personal and social needs. The central problem of the employer is to erect a set of social relationships and organizational forms, both within the enterprise and, if possible, in society at large, that will channel these aims into the production and expropriation of surplus value. Thus as a social process, capitalist production is inherently antagonistic and always potentially explosive. Though class conflicts take many forms, the most basic occurs in this struggle over the creation and expropriation of surplus value.

It is immediately evident that profits will be greater, the lower is the total wage bill paid by the employer and the greater is the productivity and intensity of labor. Education in the United States plays a dual role in the social process whereby surplus value, i.e., profit, is created and expropriated. On the one hand, by imparting technical and social skills and appropriate motivations, education increases the productive capacity of workers. On the other hand, education helps defuse and depoliticize the potentially explosive class relations of the production process, and thus serves to perpetuate the social, political, and economic conditions through which a portion of the product of labor is expropriated in the form of profits.

This simple model, reflecting the undemocratic and class-based character of economic life in the United States, bears a number of central implications:

First, we find that prevailing degrees of economic inequality and types of personal development are defined primarily by the market, property, and power relationships which define the capitalist system. Moreover, basic changes in the degree of inequality and in socially directed forms of personal development occur almost exclusively—if sometimes indirectly—through the normal process of capital accumulation and economic growth, and through shifts in the power among groups engaged in economic activity.

Economic inequality and personal development are defined by the market, property, and power relationships which define the capitalist system.

Second, the educational system does not add to or subtract from the overall degree of inequality and repressive personal development. Rather, it is best understood as an institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life through which these patterns are set, by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force. This role takes a variety of forms. Schools legitimate inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote students, and allocate them to distinct positions in the occupational hierarchy. They create and reinforce patterns of social class and racial and sexual identification among students which allow them to relate "properly" to their eventual standing in the hierarchy of authority and status in the production process. Schools foster types of personal development compatible with the relationships of dominance and subordinacy in the economic sphere, and finally, schools create surpluses of skilled labor sufficiently extensive to render effective the prime weapon of the employer in disciplining labor—the power to hire and fire.

Third, the educational system operates in this manner not so much through the conscious intentions of teachers and administrators in their day-to-day activities, but through a close correspondence between the social relationships which govern personal

Education in the United States is as contradictory and complex as the larger society.

interaction in the work place and the social relationships of the educational system. Specifically, the relationships of authority and control between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work place. Power is organized along vertical lines of authority from administration to faculty to student body; students have a degree of control over their curriculum comparable to that of the worker over the content of his job. The motivational system of the school, involving as it does grades and other external rewards and the threat of failure rather than the intrinsic social benefits of the process of education (learning) or its tangible outcome (knowledge), mirrors closely the role of wages and the specter of unemployment in the motivation of workers. The fragmented nature of jobs is reflected in the institutionalized and rarely constructive competition among students and in the specialization and compartmentalization of academic knowledge. Finally, the relationships of dominance and subordinacy in education differ by level. The rule orientation of the high school reflects the close supervision of low-level workers; the internalization of norms and freedom from continual supervision in elite colleges reflect the social relationships of upper-level white-collar work. Most state universities and community colleges, which fall in between, conform to the behavioral requisites of low-level technical, service, and supervisory personnel.

Fourth, though the school system has effectively served the interests of profit and political stability, it has hardly been a finely tuned instrument of manipulation in the hands of socially dominant groups. Schools and colleges do indeed help to justify inequality, but they also have become arenas in which a highly politicized egalitarian consciousness has developed among some parents, teachers, and students. The authoritarian classroom does produce docile workers, but it also produces misfits and rebels. The university trains the elite in the skills of domination, but it has also given birth to a powerful radical movement and critique of capitalist society. The contradictory nature of U.S. education stems in part from the fact that the imperatives of profit often pull the school system in opposite directions. The types of training required to develop productive workers are often ill suited to the perpetuation of those ideas and institutions which facilitate the profitable employment of labor. Furthermore, contradictory forces external to the school system continually impinge upon its operations. Students, working people, parents, and others have attempted to use education to attain a greater share of the social wealth, to develop genuinely critical capacities, to gain material security, in short to pursue objectives different from—and often diametrically opposed to—those of capital. Education in the United States is as contradictory and complex as the larger society: no simplistic or mechanical theory can help us understand it.

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (NY: Herder and Herder, 1972), 58–59.

2. Charles Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (NY: Vintage, 1971), 10, 11.

Youth Apprenticeship: High School for Docile Workers

by Hannah Finan Roditi

Under the battle cry of "competitiveness," high schools across the nation are being mobilized to turn out graduates with the skills needed to compete with foreign workers. At the heart of this reform wave are "youth apprenticeship" programs. States are racing to pass legislation setting them up in their schools. The concept is strongly backed by the Bush Administration, and it forms a key part of the educational program Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton is touting on the campaign trail. In October 1991 the High Skills, Competitive Workforce Act, promoting similar objectives at the national level, was introduced in Congress. These innovations will give businesses a pivotal role in determining what young people should know and be able to do when they graduate, and how they should think about themselves and society.

The "education for work" idea is winning support from conservatives and liberals alike for several reasons. First, it is presented as a way to redress the inequity of an educational system that neglects the three-quarters of young people who don't go on to complete a bachelor's degree. Second, newly popular theories of learning suggest that students learn better "in context"—in real-life situations that require thinking and problem solving. Third, there is widening agreement that this country stands to lose its higher-wage jobs unless its "front line" workers have the level of skill and adaptability of workers in industrial nations like Germany and Japan.

Typically, youth apprentices would make a three-to-four-year commitment to a trade and an employer spanning the last year or two of high school and the following two years. Their hours on the job might rise from twenty per week in year one to full time in year

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From *The Nation*, March 16, 1992. © by The Nation Company, L. P. Reprinted with permission from *The Nation* magazine.

four, and they would be paid. Teachers and employers would teach reading, math, and other courses using workplace applications. One or more technical courses would be tailored to a specific trade. Students would graduate with a high school diploma, significant work experience, credits toward an associate degree and some kind of certificate of trade mastery.

Inspired by Germany's "dual system," which places more than 60 percent of 16-year olds in workplaces to learn a trade, youth apprenticeship is being pushed by the Labor Department and is all the rage in more than a dozen states. Arkansas, California, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have demonstration apprenticeship programs in the works. In 1991, Oregon passed the most comprehensive legislation yet, a bill that "will fundamentally restructure the primary and secondary educational systems in Oregon," according to its sponsor, State Representative Vera Katz. Students will complete a Certificate of Initial Mastery in basic skills such as reading and math, and then at age 16 pursue either a traditional college prep track or a "technical and professional" track, which is expected to include substantial time on the job in the form of youth apprenticeships.

To insure that this "work-based learning" track meets the needs of business and produces adequately trained graduates, performance standards are being developed. This process was kicked off with the publication of "What Work Requires of Schools" by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. Released under the aegis of President Bush's "America 2000" education reform agenda, the report specifies what high school graduates should know and be able to do to meet business needs; for example, to work in teams, monitor and correct system performance, allocate time and money, reason and solve problems.

Seventeen states and six urban school districts have joined the National Center on Education and the Economy's New Standards Project to help produce the kind of employees business says it needs. With close links to the Administration, the N.C.E.E. is spearheading the next step, working with executives in the retail industry to draw up guidelines on what graduates should know and be able to do at age 20, and therefore what the curriculum should be teaching them at age 16.

The idea of making young people's first work experience more meaningful, their schoolwork more relevant and their transition to life after high school more fruitful is sensible. And who could argue with a system touted as leading toward a higher-skill, higher-wage economy? The problem is that although well intentioned, the current education-for-work proposals fare well on none of these counts.

Although well intentioned, current education-for-work proposals do not fare well.

Consider the "competitiveness" issue. "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!" a report released in 1990 by the N.C.E.E.'s Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, finds that only an estimated five percent of employers organize work so as to require a high level of skill among workers. The authors contend that this country's declining productivity is more the result of how employers organize work than of a shortage of skilled workers. Although in surveys employers initially report such a shortage, when pressed for specifics the great majority consistently cite the need for a low-skilled work force that would tolerate an ethic of obedience and a hierarchical organization.

An even stronger critique of the "labor shortage" or "skills mismatch" view of market trends promulgated by the Labor Department is reached by the authors of the Economic Policy Institute's recent report, "The Myth of the Coming Labor Shortage." They advocate European-style incentives for businesses to adopt production methods that require high skills among workers. Among their proposals: a one percent payroll tax that would finance training programs in the absence of employer training, and the formation of councils giving workers a say in how work is organized. In short, youth apprenticeship programs won't address America's "competitiveness" problems as long as so few jobs are available for skilled workers.

Does youth apprenticeship fare better on its learning goals? This question cannot be answered conclusively yet, since existing youth apprenticeship programs are still in the formative stages. But my impression, after visits to longstanding, well-recognized work-education programs and to the new breed of youth apprenticeship programs, was that students in them learn few academic or technical skills and almost nothing at all about independent thinking.

In the much-touted St. Louis work-study programs, seniors José and Deb describe their jobs. They say they spend the entire time photocopying and sitting alone. Few of the students in the program gain any idea of career tracks or how to advance in their assigned workplaces. In one of the few classes they attend, the teacher hammers away at the theme that capitalism and the free enterprise system equate with freedom and choice. The "math" (which is actually an accounting course) teacher told me that the business-dominated curriculum committee recently watered down the math curriculum on the ground that students didn't really need such skills on the job.

In the well-publicized Bank of America school-to-work program with a poor, predominantly black San Francisco high school, a student interviewed at his work station sheepishly tells me that his grades have declined because he doesn't have time now to do homework—not surprising since he rushes from school to work, where he stays until eight o'clock each night. He has spent a year pressing a button that takes photos of checks—and this is the student program administrators are proud to display. Arno Krackt, speaking for the bank, insists that other students have more rewarding jobs but, he adds, "the bank had a need for hourly employees for short-term jobs. . . . They may learn that this is not what they want to do for the rest of their lives." While touring the shop of a prospective employer for another youth apprenticeship program, we noticed that some of the work stations sported pinups. The chief curriculum developer and teacher-trainer said female students would "just have to learn to accept that stuff." He feared the employer would not participate if the school complained.

In order for work-education proposals to move beyond helping students fit into the corporate mold, they will need to find systematic ways of getting students to think critically about the workplace. This is the purpose of the pioneering high school curriculum *The Power in Our Hands* and the excellent new book *Learning Work: A Critical Pedagogy of Work Education*, edited by Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux. The "reflective learning" the authors describe in the latter, mandated in Ontario as part of all work-education programs, "enables us to recognize and clarify how the organization of work in society is neither natural nor inevitable. This then allows us to emphasize teaching that helps students imagine, consider, and judge a variety of possibilities for how work may be accomplished." Concretely this means, for example, getting students to explore what "fair pay" is and to evaluate the health and safety conditions at their work site. Reflective learning would examine other workplace and social issues, including individual and collective ways of resolving conflict; ethics, power, and control in the workplace; alternative ownership systems; labor rights and history; and environmental and community issues and their relationship to business.

Because incentives for business participation are so weak in this country, however, the schools have almost no power in their relationship with participating companies. The result is that business exercises veto power over anything remotely threatening in the classroom. Some small machine-shop owners, for example, don't want young workers learning about job costing because they fear that workers would then be able to determine the profit on a job. Employers can simply walk away from the schools, but more insidiously, teachers and school administrators begin to censor themselves as they increasingly focus on wooing business partners.

For example, a leading academic who is developing a new set of national student-performance standards admits that though he would like to include more assessment questions on unionism and other workplace issues, he doesn't see how to do that and retain the business support he has so assiduously nurtured. A pilot version of these standards will be tested in Illinois, a state with a deep-rooted history of labor struggle and union consciousness. In another such state, youth apprenticeship program developers say they avoid including anything on unions in the curriculum in order not to scare away machine-shop owners. The only mediating force is the Perkins Act, which mandates that students be taught "all aspects" of their trade, but states are implementing this language unevenly, at best.

Apprenticeship program developers avoid including anything on unions in the curriculum.

Neither state nor proposed national legislation on youth apprenticeship encourages critical reflection. Nor are teachers being trained to be able to develop this skill; rather, they are being instructed in how to identify skills that businesses need. In short, most apprenticeship programs are aimed at producing docile workers—problem solvers, but within employer-set limits—rather than citizens of a democracy capable of independent thought.

Apprenticeship programs could also reinforce class distinctions. In a carefully researched recent study of the Australian and British youth training systems and the lessons they hold for the United States, education consultant Margaret Vickers warns against following in the footsteps of Britain's mediocre employer-driven system.

> "In the U.S. system, where the most prestigious forms of education and training are clearly [controlled by schools], the parallel creation of an employer-controlled . . . training scheme would inevitably trap the scheme's clients into low-skill, low-status options . . . The surest way to help young people advance along respected pathways is to ensure that the training they receive is controlled and delivered primarily by schools and colleges, rather than by the employment sector."

Even in the case of enlightened school and business partners, 16-year-olds who enroll in youth apprenticeship programs are ill served. Current demonstration programs and proposals isolate these students almost completely from other students. And although many students don't participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, enrolling in these programs eliminates that option for those who want it. In focus-group discussions, parents and students consistently express their fears of exactly these results. In a Mississippi Delta focus group I conducted, African-American parents were particularly concerned that youth apprenticeship could limit their children's access to a bachelor's degree.

Because of the pressure to produce a student skilled in a particular occupational area, the exploration of a variety of occupations is discouraged.

Their concerns have merit. In their most ambitious conception, youth apprenticeship programs would lead to an associate's degree. Since most associate's credits are not transferable to Bachelor of Arts programs, and since work experience for credit is frowned on by B.A. programs, a youth apprenticeship graduate would have difficulty getting a B.A. Moreover, despite assurances that the work-based learning track isn't second class to college prep and won't restrict students' options, program designers are finding that occupationally specific courses crowd out, for example, foreign languages. And because of the pressure to produce a student skilled in a particular occupational area, the exploration of a variety of occupations is discouraged.

Perhaps most important is the danger that a learning environment geared almost completely and uncritically to success at work starting at age 16 could act as an intellectual straitjacket. The experience of Germany is relevant here. A high-level German education official told me, "Many of our youth apprentices participate in the union where they work. They elect their own representative. This gives them a different view of the workplace. And we have community sports and photography clubs, unlike in the United States, where everything revolves around the school." The development of community-based sports and youth activity centers is one of the reforms needed before school-to-work education can contribute adequately to young people's learning and preparation for life.

Students should rotate through a variety of work experiences while in high school, rather than being pressured or encouraged to make an uninformed several-year commitment to one occupational area. They should be exposed to nonprofits, community service, and small businesses. And they should interact with a broad group of fellow students rather than only with those who have chosen a similar occupational area. Leadership development must be a driving principle of classes and program operations.

There are programs that strike a balance between a nontraditional school environment and work, and that provide excellent models for developing the range of citizenship skills and work experience that young people need. Youth-Build, for example, engages city students in building low-income housing while they learn academic skills. Students learn project management, meeting facilitation, conflict resolution, peer support, and other leadership skills. They also elect representatives to the program decision-making board and help hire staff.

The Center for Law and Education and REAL Enterprises both illustrate the possibilities of moving beyond the corporate sector. They have helped schools pioneer approaches in Chicago and in the rural South in which students carry out community-needs assessments and then start up and run small businesses or work with existing community groups.

At Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, students in grades nine, ten, and twelve spend thirteen weeks a year at a job. During this stint they return to class one day a week for discussion of labor and union issues, business links to the community, worker skills and attitudes, etc. Learning is enriched as students compare and reflect on their experiences in different workplaces. Two programs at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, systematically encourage students to think through and write about a range of workplace issues. One of these introduces mostly disadvantaged students to teaching, in the process requiring them to re-evaluate radically their own school experience.

These examples are lonely exceptions. Most work-education proposals and experiments discourage independence and creativity in the country's younger generation. Yet most current schooling isn't much better. Parents, educators, labor unions, and others should push national, state, and local policy-makers toward the kind of teaching and school/work activities that will give young people some solid work experience without suppressing independent thought.

Section 4

Public Interest vs. Private Profit: Subjecting Schools to "The Dictatorship of the Marketplace"

Corporations are most familiar with the operating principles of the private sector, since that is where they operate (except, of course, when they rely on the public sector for tax breaks, Pentagon contracts, or tariffs to protect them from foreign competition). Business-minded individuals often suggest that some free-market ideology is just what we need to improve our schools. In response, Dennis Evans, a former high school principal now associated with the University of California at Irvine, has proposed that "if we are so enamored of the corporate model, then perhaps we should consider a Chrysler-type bailout for our schools; give the schools everything they need financially and then see if they can 'turn a profit.'"[1]

A more serious and wide-ranging critique is provided by this section's first essay, written by James Moffett. When applied to education, free-market dogma sacrifices some children to others, he contends. "Imposing the rules of the private sector on the public sector destroys the point of the public sector, which is to act collectively for the benefit of all."

Moffett's overview gives way to two more essays, each of which focuses on vouchers and "school choice" plans, commonly cited as examples of how education will benefit by competition—that is, by setting schools against each other. Robert Lowe questions the benefits ascribed to such programs, challenging in particular the widely cited conclusions of John Chubb and Terry Moe.[2] Martin Carnoy briefly reviews the experience of another country, Chile, and finds a disturbing precedent there.

We conclude with a few words from Deborah Meier, who has taken a leading role in creating ambitious, progressive schools in New York City under a kind of "choice" umbrella. But the motives for, and operation of, that system are quite different from what privatizers would have us do. Our guiding principle in educating children, she says, must be democracy—and it is no easy feat to reconcile democratic values with what she memorably calls the "dictatorship of the marketplace." Meier's indictment extends beyond voucher programs; it suggests the corrosive effect of any sort of interference in public education by business interests. The quest for private profits, in whatever form it takes, can only contaminate the process of helping all our students become enthusiastic and expert learners.

NOTES

1. Dennis L. Evans, "The Mythology of the Marketplace in School Choice," *Education Week*, October 17, 1990, p. 32.

2. Lowe's article is reprinted from an anthology that is an invaluable resource in its own right: *Selling Out Our Schools: Vouchers, Markets, and the Future of Public Education*, published by and available from Rethinking Schools (1001 E. Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212).

On to the Past: Wrong-Headed School Reform

by James Moffett

The governmental initiative to reform schooling has been based on two of the very assumptions most responsible for the problems that reform aims to solve. One is that assessment is the instrument of change because schools teach to tests. The second is that business knows best because public education is really just another business. Since the notion of reforming schools through national assessment has already received considerable criticism, I will focus here on the tendency to treat schooling like a business.

PRIVATIZING PUBLIC EDUCATION

It is impossible to understand the movement toward a national curriculum, which does not fit American ideals, or the railroading of national assessment, which is a wildly irrational way of dealing with the problems of schooling, unless you realize how closely these initiatives are tied to business, state legislatures, and other noneducational managers. For example, the New Standards Project that works so closely with the governors' National Education Goals Panel is co-directed by Marc Tucker, author of *America's Choice—High Skills or Low Wages?* and head of the National Center on Education and the Economy. Business should indeed be served by a good system of public education, but the higher-order thinking abilities and creative problem solving that it correctly believes graduates must now bring to the work force are precisely what have suffered most from testing, standardizing, and centralizing—that is, from an education system driven by government and industry.

The assumption that comparative testing is the best means for changing schools rests on the equally unfounded assumption that

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Adapted from *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening through Education*, by James Moffett. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.

public education will improve if schools operate by free-market competition, as businesses are alleged to do. Corporations that were forced to reform themselves to meet foreign competition now come on like born-again revivalists: "We did it, so we can show you how to do it." Chrysler's president, Lee Iacocca, became a folk hero for saving his company, when in fact it was taxpayers' money that saved Chrysler through a bailout or subsidy that, had it been paid to a single mother living with her children in poverty, would have been called welfare. Had Chrysler's cost-benefit management by objectives not arrogantly exploited the Big Three's monopoly through such practices as deliberate obsolescence, Chrysler would have been able to cope with real competition when it finally came—from abroad. Ford would *already* have made "quality" job one. And General Motors would already have adopted the production methods of its Saturn division throughout the corporation. Thus endangered by serious foreign competition, American corporations have indeed had to make some practical changes—but not in the direction of a moral conversion.

During recent decades, leading companies in every field—pharmaceuticals, chemicals, defense contractors, automobiles, brokerage, savings and loans, insurance—have been convicted or indicted for breaking laws. Indeed, industry analysts are saying that even the oldest and most revered names can no longer be trusted. Criminal behavior aside, what about just plain morality? How much honest public concern can we expect from corporations that fire older employees to avoid paying retirement benefits, keep secret their own unfavorable findings about their products, and mount massively expensive campaigns—paid for by the consumer through increased prices of goods—to lobby against environmental protection?

Douglas Noble, author of *The Classroom Arsenal: Military Research Information Technology and Public Education* [and chapter 9 of this volume], compiled brief profiles of members of the board of the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) as a way of asking, "Are these really the people we want to be shaping our children's schools?"

> Norman R. Augustine, CEO of Martin-Marietta, formerly served in six positions at the Department of Defense, including undersecretary of the Army. According to *Business Month*, he has "played a key role in the shaping of the modern U.S. arsenal," and remains a "consummate insider" in U.S. defense policy. . . .

> James K. Baker is vice chairman of NASDC, CEO of . . . Arvin Industries, and a founding member of Commit, Inc., a business group involved in Indiana school reform. According to *Education Week*, Indiana teacher organizations are currently engaged in "all out war" with Commit, whose adversarial agenda "confirms the worst fears public educators hold about their new and powerful partner. . . ."
>
> Frank Shrontz, vice chair of NASDC and CEO of Boeing, . . . a major defense contractor, served in the 1970s as both assistant secretary of defense and assistant secretary of the Air Force. In the past year, Shrontz has been battling Washington State teachers to prevent "fair tax" legislation that would increase Boeing's taxes by $500 million, with much of the money targeted for the state's beleaguered schools. . . .
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> Kay Whitmore [is] CEO of Eastman Kodak, . . . which has been reeling . . . from [among other things] huge fines for patent infringements and environmental pollution. . . .
>
> Louis Gerstner, Jr., vice chair of NASDC and CEO of tobacco-food conglomerate RJR Nabisco, is known for his marketing genius. [Today Gerstner is CEO of IBM.] As former president of American Express, he . . . exploited an elitist image with the slogan "membership has its privileges." Gerstner was hired as CEO of RJR Nabisco by the firm whose leveraged buyout of RJR was called by *Time* magazine "the worst display of greed since the . . . robber barons." The buyout has also been immortalized in such books as *Barbarians at the Gate* and *True Greed*. Since taking charge, Gerstner's top priority has been to stem the erosion of cigarette sales, which account for over 60% of the firm's operating income. Under his leadership, the company has recently been hit with several scandals: its targeted marketing toward poor black youth and young, white, working-class females; its aggressive cigarette exports to Third World populations; and . . . its exploitation of young people through its "Old Joe Camel" advertising campaign. Meanwhile, the RJR Nabisco Foundation has channeled $30 million into its own Next Century Schools program, a prototype of NASDC that funds model ventures stressing extended schooling, productivity, and strict accountability.[1]

America 2000, the Bush Administration's school reform strategy (now adopted by President Clinton and renamed Goals 2000), proposed that, under the direction of such people, the New American Schools Development Corporation should fund and guide the research and development of experimental projects to reinvent schooling.

Behind this federal sponsoring of partnership between public schools and for-profit companies lies tremendous anger in the business world that corporations' efforts to survive in global competition are being thwarted by poorly educated employees. Efficiency experts have convinced business leaders, as they did earlier regarding company alcoholism, that fixing employees is more cost-effective than replacing employees—in this case with ones who can communicate, collaborate, and cogitate. Companies are furious about having to pay both school taxes and the costs of running their own "in house" schools to do what they believe public education should be doing.

Companies are furious about the costs of running their own "in house" schools to do what they believe public education should be doing.

They have a just complaint here. The best way to respond to it, however, is to reform schooling in the most effective way, considering *all* educational goals. Business does not know what is best for schooling, and it is suffering no more from poor education than is the rest of the society, including many individuals. As a stakeholder and as a possible learning resource, business should indeed participate in school reform, but it has too narrow a perspective and too limited a motive to guide it. The results would surely be skewed and not even in business' own interest. Both the corporate model and its money are dangerous.

The government's conviction that business can show the schools how to set their house in order derives not only from a concern about the employability of the populace but also from the old false analogy that running schools is like manufacturing and marketing commodities. When Lee Iacocca addressed the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) at its annual convention in May 1991, he said, "Your product needs a lot of work, and in the end, it's your job." His tough talk on the problem of the increasing numbers of children in poverty was that "your customers don't want to hear about your raw materials problem—they care about results."

So children are raw materials. After complaining that Chrysler spends $60,000,000 for school taxes and still has to teach basic skills to many workers, Iacocca likened graduating a student who can't read to selling a car without an engine. "It's massive consumer fraud." (How good it must have felt to be able to level against another "industry" a charge that has so often been leveled against his own.) Iacocca pursued the theme of consumerism: "Right now, American education has a lot of dissatisfied customers."[2]

Comparing children to metal, rubber, and plastic is hard to forgive: Comparing human growth to factory production implies the putting together of inert parts into subassemblies that eventually go into that final assemblage, the product. This applies an inorganic, particle approach to an organic, holistic process. But what irrational thinking anyway to compare students to products when these "products" are also the "consumers," both as students and later as parents and taxpayers. Furthermore, these consumers are taxpaying voters who also *run* schools. Chrysler's customers don't run the company. What possible sense can this analogy between school and business make when the raw materials, the products, and the consumers of schooling are all one and the same?

It is part of current CEO thinking to lump enterprises together from a managerial viewpoint and thus ignore the nature of each enterprise.

But it is part of the current CEO thinking to lump all large enterprises together from a purely managerial viewpoint and thus to ignore the actual nature of each enterprise. Managing is managing, it is thought, regardless of whether the organization is a foundation, a government agency, a for-profit company, or a public institution. A manufacturing executive can tell an education system what it ought to do because he looks on schooling as just another outfit to run. But what the outfit *does* is critical.

A politically conservative educational initiative—Republican or Democratic—classifies education as just another consumer good in order to push privatization, which is the real goal of its brand of "school reform." In his ASCD speech, Iacocca also said, "People are not just going to settle for an inferior product—they want to shop around." There it is, the "free-market" concept of education whereby parental choice is extended by vouchers to private schools. Thus conservatives can graft privatization onto school restructuring. After all, wasn't free enterprise the way for *perestroika* to cure the ills of the Soviet Union?

In May 1991, the same month that Iacocca addressed the ASCD, *Harper's Magazine* ran an article describing Britain's national curriculum and national assessment, quickly installed at the beginning of the 1990s by Margaret Thatcher's education secretary, Kenneth Baker, whom she later made chairman of the Conservative Party and then home secretary. "Thatcher and Baker chose to see education as an enterprise that could be made more efficient by making schools subject to market forces."[3] Brits are unembarrassed by privatization of their education system, which has always combined both public and private schools, but their teachers are now complaining that they can't teach for testing.

In America the advocacy of vouchers incorporating private schools into public education remains controversial. So the privatization of schooling proceeds unannounced as such but clearly marked by proposals to 1) encourage business to fund school projects, 2) extend parental choice to private schools, and 3) throw all schools into free-market competition.

A full-page ad in the same issue of *Harper's Magazine* that contained the article on Britain's national curriculum bares the strategy of parlaying school restructuring into privatization:

> A well-established practice from the business world could do wonders: management by exception. . . . Deregulate and decentralize. Encourage teachers to design and implement teacher cooperatives or collaboratives. Give principals the authority they need to run schools without red tape. Permit parents to choose the public school their children attend. In short, permit schools—some of them at least—to be market-sensitive.[4]

The company that paid for the ad was a prime defense contractor, Rockwell International. The main author of the ad was Denis Doyle, who is co-author of *Winning the Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Our Schools More Competitive* and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank.

National assessment and national curriculum contradict by nature this call for deregulation and decentralization, which are being used here to justify competition among schools considered as businesses. The decentralization of education need have no connection whatsoever with "free markets," since education could perfectly well decentralize and remain totally public. What enables the authors of the ad to modulate from the now-popular idea of decentralized schools to their ultimate goal of "market-sensitive" schools is precisely the deceptive confusion between the public and private sectors. For *business*, decentralization of government does mean deregulation, which can indeed create a free market. That is simply not the case for education.

For business, decentralization of government does mean deregulation. That is not the case for education.

But it is not just the false analogy between the two sectors that misleads. It's also the boast that business holds the patent on "management by exception," which presumably means creative thinking that waives bureaucratic rules. Since when does American business practice this in an exemplary way? And for whose benefit if it does?

Of course it is true that, since government regulates business far less than education, business is freer to develop and exercise creativity. That freedom defines in fact much of the difference between the public and private sectors. This should give business a reason to help liberate schools from regulation, which the ad purports to do, not prolong it, as national assessment and a national curriculum would certainly do in providing the score comparisons on which free-market schooling would be based. The ad argues for freeing teachers and principals from *school district* centralization but not from control by *state and federal government*, with which large corporations are more naturally allied. School districts respond more to local businesses, which are more apt to include total community welfare in their aspirations for schools than is Rockwell International.

In both Britain and the U.S. the nationalizing of education through testing is a move to cut spending for social services, one of the biggest of which is schooling. The ostensible motive is accountability—to get more out of schools while putting no more into them. Conservative constituents want to get their kids out of public schools and send them to private schools without paying for both, or at least to get their kids out of the worst public schools and into the better ones.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which tends much more than other educational subject organizations to see things from the viewpoint of minorities or poor people, spotted this favoritism immediately:

> What about children of parents who don't have transportation options? Who can't pay the difference between their voucher and the private school tuition? Who can't read the brochures comparing the schools they may choose from? Who are so busy with two or three jobs that they can't visit the schools to make a choice?[5]

This article in *TESOL Matters* cites 1991 Teacher of the Year Jeffrey White's objection to school choice: that it presupposes good and bad schools and therefore favored and unfavored children. The article continues:

> Providing seed money for innovative schools is an exciting concept, yet the New American Schools are limited in advance by the requirement of consensus on World Class Standards and the focus on scoring well on the "National Achievement Tests." Bush's recommendations for leadership in this process muffle the voices of educators, parents, and students while amplifying the voices of business officials and politicians.[6]

The Pennsylvania legislature rejected a plan that would have provided each child a $900 voucher to attend a public school in another district or a private school, because the amount would discriminate against the poor, $900 being too little to pay tuition at most private schools. The 1991 Massachusetts "choice" plan "flatly encourages students to leave poor districts for rich ones" since "the 'home' districts are charged a 'tuition' roughly equivalent to the per-pupil expenditure in the receiving district." As Robert Lowe has written [see chapter 15 of this volume], "This market ethos ignores any sense of responsibility for other children's education, any obligation for community control of education, any commitment to schools as sites of democratic discourse."[7]

The whole point of comparing schools, which otherwise seems irrational as a way to improve them, makes perfect sense when viewed from the standpoint of a constituency of business executives and conservative individuals. Comparing schools will expose ineffectuality, spurring the bad ones to shape up and permitting parents to identify the good ones. But it is obviously not mere dereliction that causes school failure. In any case, comparative testing cannot possibly be a fair way to sort schools for efficiency because too many local factors determine success and failure, most of which—such as population to be served, local history, and material resources—schools have no control over.

This "market-sensitive" approach will simply increase the differential between "good" and "bad" schools. It will not improve overall quality, because nothing intrinsic to better learning will necessarily have occurred. Most private schools to which some ghetto students have been admitted on vouchers run essentially the same curriculum as do the public schools from which the students have been rescued. But they have smaller classes, little bureaucracy, and a more serene atmosphere—all attributes that reform should bring to public education. Were these private schools to be incorporated into the public system or enlarged enough to make room for other lucky refugees, they too would come to resemble regular schools—unless the whole system were reformed. A few havens for the favored prove nothing.

Comparing schools makes perfect sense when viewed from the standpoint of business executives.

In other words, we can't afford to have *any* bad schools. There is nothing efficient or cost-effective about polarizing education in this way. *All* schools must improve. Losers may be acceptable and necessary in business but not in education. Applying free-market thinking to education is sacrificing some children to others. Inefficiency becomes an excuse for inequality. And how far are you going to carry free enterprise in education? Will the schools that fail file for bankruptcy? What do you do with them? And with the children still stuck in them? Imposing the rules of the private sector on the public sector destroys the point of the public sector, which is to act collectively for the benefit of all.

The idea that business knows best and that education should imitate the secret of its "success"—free-market competition—underlies the movement toward national assessment, which is supposed to act as a consumer's guide. This approach to reform is faulty from one end to the other—both the assumptions and the strategies built on them. If rationalization were not standing in for rationality and if it were not backed by government and business, this line of thinking would not even have to be refuted. It is simply not true that educators have no idea of how to improve learning unless their dereliction is exposed and they are forced to cast about for something better.

THE RIGHT MEANS ARE RIGHT HERE

The real truth about school failure is that educators aren't doing what they know to do. The right things to do in literacy, for example, have been known for decades and could give us a nation of readers any time we could succeed in *implementing* them. We have to ask why the changes that educators themselves propose for literacy never happen. And the reasons are systemic.

The real truth about school failure is that educators aren't doing what they know to do.

For example, the classic overemphasis on the receptive activities of listening and reading suits bureaucratization and politicization better. Authentic speaking and writing are much harder to control and centralize, precisely because, as *productive* activities, they shift decision making to the learner and call for an individualized curriculum. And yet learning to read through writing is one of the most promising roads to literacy. In the 1920s and 1930s some educators championed other badly needed practices, such as individualized or free reading, which would likewise have greatly improved literacy learning but also never became more than marginal methods, especially in secondary schools. Individualized reading also challenges centralized control, as does individualized learning generally. And yet individualization may more nearly meet the needs of reform than any other single practice.

One of the most often repeated slogans of today's reform effort in math and science asserts that "less is more"—meaning that instead of mistakenly trying to incorporate all the new knowledge in these fields, schools should more thoroughly cover fewer topics, selected for their representation of the field. In 1913 Alfred North Whitehead wrote, "Mathematics, if it is to be used in general education, must be subjected to a rigorous process of selection and adaptation. . . . It must . . . deal directly and simply with a few general ideas of far-reaching importance."[8] On the broader question of curricular integration, which educators likewise advocate repeatedly, Whitehead wrote in 1916, "The solution which I am urging is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations. . . . Unless quadratic equations fit into a connected curriculum, of course there is no reason to teach anything about them."[9]

It is simply not true that change in education awaits new ideas or higher goals or more information. What we know to do far exceeds what we are free to do. Neither more research, nor assessment data, nor bright ideas, nor money will improve public education if we can't act on what we already know. The blockages are the key. Unless you analyze and remove the obstacles, education reform is impossible. And this takes realistic problem solving, which conceits of national assessment merely defer.

Most teachers are doing many things they don't believe in and are not doing much of what they do [illegible]ieve in.

The assumption that educators are nonplused and that schools have to be fixed by outsiders not only generates a tremendously negative feeling in schoolpeople—who know just how much they already suffer from being political footballs in a top-down approach—but it stymies still further the implementation of changes schoolpeople already know should be made. Most teachers I work with are doing many things they don't believe in and are not doing much of what they do believe in.

The mandate to "reinvent schooling" does not mean we have to scrap everything and start from scratch. If a way is cleared, most of the desired reform can consist simply of throwing out unjustified practices that now fill the curriculum and pulling together into a unified learning field the many excellent practices that generations of educators have long advocated and that some schools have managed to implement in bits and pieces. Imagine the exasperation of those educators who *have* begun successful changes only to have the government announce with a flourish of trumpets that it is going to reassert even more strongly the standardized testing and other centralization that such experimental enclaves have fought to waive in order to succeed.

Maybe formalization and centralization served a worthy purpose before teaching became a serious profession, in the Prussia of Frederick the Great or in the Massachusetts of Horace Mann. But considering the sophisticated operations of today's professional organizations for educators, they are no longer necessary. Indeed, it is downright destructive for government at any level to continue to standardize learning and to specify the subjects and methods of public education.

The best ways of learning are not recondite exotica. They are taking place all around us, all the time—if not often in public schools, then in some private schools. But if not in any schools at all, then everywhere else—at home, in the workplace, on the playground. People are learners, and they are learning all the time. We already know what works. More practical evidence exists for effective learning practices than special research could ever amass. So the prospect for reform is much more positive than it looks: act on what we know about learning, and don't let politics and economics obscure the obvious practical knowledge staring us in the face from the whole environment.

NOTES

1. Douglas D. Noble, "Who Are These Guys? Corporate Involvement in the 'New American Schools,'" *Rethinking Schools*, March/April 1992, p. 20.

2. These quotations are from "Sound Bites," *ASCD Update*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, May 1991, p. 5.

3. Tim Brookes, "A Lesson to Us All," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1991, p. 27.

4. *Harper's Magazine*, May 1991, no page number.

5. Mary Lou McClosky and D. Scott Enright, "America 2000—Two TESOL Members Respond," *TESOL Matters*, August/September 1991, p. 1.

6. Ibid., p. 8.

7. Robert Lowe, "The Illusion of Choice," *Rethinking Schools*, March/April 1992, p. 22 [this quote appears on page 157, in the next chapter of this volume].

8. Alfred North Whitehead, "The Mathematical Curriculum," presidential address to the London branch of the Mathematical Association, in *The Aims of Education* (1929; reprint, New York: New American Library/Dutton, 1949), p. 85.

9. Ibid., pp. 18–19.

The Hollow Promise of School Vouchers

by Robert Lowe

For nearly 150 years public education in the United States has been recognized as a fundamental public good. That recognition is now under attack. Building on more than a decade of national power that has radically redefined the nature of public responsibility, conservatives, under the aegis of "choice," have proposed the substitution of markets for public schools. And they have made their arguments plausible to diverse constituencies.

Despite the grave inadequacies of public education today, however, throwing schools open to the marketplace will promote neither excellence nor equality for all. Rather, it will enhance the freedom of the privileged to pursue their advancement unfettered by obligation to community.

Current efforts to promote an educational marketplace through choice trace directly to the work of conservative economist Milton Friedman. Writing in the mid-1950s, Friedman proposed that every family be given a voucher of equal worth for each child attending school. Under this plan, families could choose any school that met rudimentary government oversight (which Friedman likened to the sanitary inspection of a restaurant). Parents could add their own resources to the value of a voucher, and, presumably, schools could set their own tuition level and admission requirements.[1]

At the time, Friedman's proposal failed to attract widespread support. While some people excoriated public schools during the 1950s for curricular laxity that allegedly gave Russians the jump in the space race, optimism prevailed that curriculum innovation and more attention to advanced placement classes would remedy the problem. Further, for the first decade after the 1954 *Brown v. Board*

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of Education decision, optimism remained high that public schools could create equality of educational opportunity. In fact, it was school desegregation that most underscored the conservative nature of Friedman's stance.

THE FIRST CHOICE PROGRAM

The first choice program provided white students in Virginia public funds to attend private academies in order to avoid attending public schools with Blacks.[2] Friedman addressed this matter in his proposal. Although he expressed his personal desire for integration, he believed that state-imposed desegregation violated parents' freedom to choose. Thus Friedman asserted the primacy of freedom over equality and finessed the lack of freedom the less-than-equal possessed.

It would be a mistake to conclude that support for "choice" represents a consensus among diverse political forces.

During much of the 1960s confidence prevailed that public education could promote both excellence and equity. But by the 1980s such confidence had seriously deteriorated in a political climate that identified the state as the perpetrator rather than the ameliorator of social and economic ills.[3] A wave of national reports contributed to this climate by maintaining that the United States was losing its competitive edge because schools were inadequately developing students' skills.[4] At the same time, sustained inequities in educational outcomes between white students and students of color seriously undermined faith in public schools' capacity to provide equal educational opportunity. In such an environment, a new private school choice program that emphasized opportunities for low-income students of color was linked with a new, more public relations oriented defense of the educational marketplace. This approach met considerable success in creating the illusion that choice would serve all.

The link was forged publicly in June 1990 when Wisconsin State Rep. Annette "Polly" Williams (D-Milwaukee), the African-American sponsor of the highly publicized Milwaukee Parent Choice Program, traveled to Washington, D.C., as a featured participant in the unveiling of *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* by John Chubb and Terry Moe.[5] Rarely do scholarly works become media events, but this event signified the launching of a vigorous campaign to promote educational choice. It also implied the existence of far broader support for opening schools to the marketplace than the historically conservative constituency for choice would suggest. Although it would be a mistake to conclude that support for "choice" represents a consensus among diverse political forces, it rapidly is becoming the major policy issue affecting schools in the United States today.

To summarize their argument, Chubb and Moe assert that public schools provide inadequate instruction because they lack the autonomy necessary to create effective education; they lack autonomy because they are bureaucratic; and they are bureaucratic because politics shapes them. Thus, they claim the way to create effective schools is to substitute the market for politics. The clarity of their argument and the simplicity of their solution, apparently buttressed by the analysis of massive data bases, may seem persuasive. But problems with their formulations abound.

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

First of all, Chubb and Moe assume that *A Nation at Risk*, along with less influential reports of the 1980s, provides such telling evidence of educational malfeasance that drastic measures are justified.[6] Serious questions might be raised about the test results marshalled to document this state of affairs. It is questionable whether standardized test scores can accurately gauge the nation's educational health, a point Chubb and Moe themselves make in another context.

Even assuming such scores have value, the strategy of *A Nation at Risk* to document both declining scores within the United States and unfavorable comparison of scores with other countries hardly withstands close scrutiny. Its authors fail to note that their data suggest only a modest decline in scores since the 1960s. They do not acknowledge the upward trajectory of scores on several tests in the 1970s and 1980s, and they also ignore tests that showed no decline.[7] Further, the report inappropriately contrasts the achievement of 12th graders in the United States with those of other countries, since the groups are not comparable. Most students in the United States reach the 12th grade, and a high percentage progresses beyond. In many other countries only an elite group completes high school. Thus international comparisons beneath the collegiate level have limited utility.[8]

Lack of evidence indicating "a rising tide of mediocrity," to use the unfortunate phrasing of *A Nation at Risk*, in no way suggests that children of color are receiving an adequate education. But it undercuts the justification of a market-based educational system for all based on the assumption that nothing could be lost by dismantling public schools. More important, Chubb and Moe fail to prove that private schools do a better job than public ones. Scholars have raised a number of questions about the data Chubb and Moe relied upon, including whether a brief multiple-choice test adequately documented student performance and whether the private school sample over-represented elite preparatory schools.[9] Although many Black and Latino families have avoided the degradations of miserable public schools by enrolling their children in Catholic institutions, the mere fact of private status obviously does not confer excellence on schools.

The mere fact of private status does not confer excellence on schools.

Further, Chubb and Moe exaggerate when they suggest that public schools are rendered incoherent by the variety of political influences that shape them. Their pluralistic notion of educational politics fails to recognize that through most of the twentieth century schools were elite-dominated. Bureaucratic structures, in part, were designed by elites at the turn of the century to remove schools from popular political control.[10] Yet altered power relations can inspire bureaucratic measures that protect the rights of minorities and the poor. Thus recent bureaucratic regulations, engendered by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, are the real objects of conservative complaint. These have promoted desegregation, bilingual education, and education of the handicapped, institutionalizing a modicum of equity in public schools as a response to the demands of those traditionally denied power. That such regulations cannot adequately secure equality of educational opportunity does not mean that the market can do any better.

Chubb and Moe assume that the market will create quality education for everyone through the mechanism of choice. Yet choice certainly has not accomplished this in the private sector of the economy. If the affluent can choose health spas in the Caribbean and gracious homes, the poor must choose inadequate health care and dilapidated housing. To the extent that those with limited resources have won forms of protection, it has not been guaranteed by the play of the market, but by governmental regulation. The conservative agenda of deregulation over the past decade has eroded those protections and greatly increased the disparity between the wealthy and the poor in the United States. A market system of education is merely an extension of deregulation and promises to compound social inequities.

A market system of education promises to compound social inequities.

In the market system promoted by Friedman, Chubb and Moe, and conservative political and corporate leaders, public taxation would guarantee relatively modest vouchers worth the same amount for every student in each state. Families, acting as consumers, would then choose the schools their children would attend. But unlike the Milwaukee program where a lottery determines admission, schools may choose as well. Chubb and Moe are adamant about this:

> Schools must be able to define their own missions and build their own programs in their own ways, and they cannot do this if their student population is thrust on them by outsiders. They must be free to admit as many or as few students as they want, based on whatever criteria they think relevant—intelligence, interest, motivation, behavior, special needs—and they must be free to exercise their own, informed judgment about individual applicants.[11]

CHOOSING THE ADVANTAGED

It is in their interest to choose those students who are already high achievers, and it is in their interest—especially for smaller schools—to accept those whose families can supplement the amount of the voucher they are given. Friedman's version of the plan would allow individual families the right to add their own cash to a voucher. Chubb and Moe would allow local districts to augment the value of vouchers through increased local taxation. In either case, the wealthy would have greater choice than the poor.

Advocates of an educational marketplace, then, have won a significant ideological victory by successfully labelling their program "choice" rather than the more neutral sounding "voucher." While no one in their right mind would deny families educational options, "choice" obscures the reality that those who come from economically empowered families are those most likely to be chosen by good schools. As in the marketplace writ large, what one can purchase depends on how much currency is brought to the transaction.

Choice also obscures how the already advantaged would benefit financially at the expense of the less fortunate. A reduced tax rate would provide the well-to-do with a voucher for part of their tuition for private schools. This contrasts favorably with the current situation which requires them to pay higher taxes for public schools in addition to relying solely on their own resources if they choose private institutions. Such a tax advantage, obvious in the Friedman plan, would exist in the Chubb and Moe variant as well since wealthy districts' decisions to raise taxes above the lower limit would be offset by the abolition of federal and state-level taxation that redistributes resources to poor districts. For the poor, in contrast, the baseline vouchers would be difficult to add on to, creating a situation reminiscent of Southern Jim Crow education where vast differences existed between per pupil expenditures for Black and White schools.

Choice also obscures how the advantaged would benefit at the expense of the less fortunate.

Under Jim Crow it was common for African Americans to supplement meager public funding by constructing schoolhouses with their own donated labor and paying teachers out of their inadequate incomes.[12] But Blacks could not rectify these inequities despite extraordinary sacrifices. As the scholar W.E.B. DuBois maintained, if some of these starved schools managed to achieve excellence through unusual efforts, greater funding would have made such excellence far more widespread.[13]

A voucher system of education can provide support for long-established community-based education programs that have effectively served children of color on shoestring budgets. But as the failure of the Juanita Virgil Academy suggests, the notion that choice would create a nation of small, effective schools is a construction as mythical as the notion that the market can maintain a nation of shopkeepers. A high level of capitalization and economies of scale would be necessary to construct buildings, to conduct advertising campaigns, to maintain staffing with an unpredictable number of students, and to make do with the unsupplemented vouchers those without wealth would bring. A likely result would be educational versions of fast-food conglomerates, with scripted teacher behaviors similar to the standardized patter of McDonald's order clerks. Like nineteenth century charity schools, such schools would compose the bottom tier of an educational hierarchy based on privilege.

Aside from the inequities associated with a market-based approach to schooling, such a strategy raises fundamental issues of educational purpose. Should taxpayers contribute to financing schools that have no public accountability no matter how objectionable many might find their goals? Should the public subsidize elite prep schools, schools run for profit, schools with racist ideologies, and schools run by corporations to train future workers? Should families be regarded as entrepreneurial units charged with maximizing their children's educational opportunities? This market ethos ignores any sense of responsibility for other children's education, any obligation for community control of education, any commitment to schools as sites of democratic discourse, any need for the new common curriculum some educators are forging out of the cultural works and political struggles of the diverse peoples who have shaped the United States.

This market ethos ignores any sense of responsibility for other children's education.

CONSERVATIVES EXACERBATE DIFFERENCES

It is no small irony that so many conservatives have accused the multiculturalist movement of balkanization when their own politics have profoundly exacerbated the real differences that exist between groups in the United States. Certainly Republicans are not solely responsible for a long history of governmental policies that have developed suburban preserves for middle-class whites at the expense of urban economies inhabited by the poor and people of color.[14] Yet since the early 1980s regressive tax reform, diminished social services, and a benign attitude toward the flight of manufacturing jobs beyond U.S. borders have significantly increased the disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Already by 1983, according to historian Robert Weisbrot, "the cumulative impact of Reagan's policies involved a $25 billion transfer in disposable income from the less well-off to the richest fifth of Americans, and a rise in the number of poor people from 29.3 million in 1980 to 35.3 million."[15]

There are now signs that the strategy of suburbanization is yielding to urban gentrification as professional jobs in the service sector replace blue-collar positions. Historian Kenneth Jackson has indicated that rising fuel, land, and housing costs, along with changes in family organization, make suburban living less desirable.[16] In addition, privatization is a major incentive for the affluent to resettle in cities where inadequate revenues are starving public services. Increasingly in cities, where deindustrialization and reduced federal aid have devastated public spaces, urban professionals are paying only for those services that benefit themselves. These enclaves of privilege support private country clubs, private security guards, private road repair services, and private schools.[17]

As suburbanites enjoy private pursuits at the expense of public services, they will displace and further marginalize the poor.

Adding to such services, choice is a way of subsidizing urban professionals' taste for private education in environments where even the best public schools do not always accommodate them. Although virtually every city has magnet schools which disproportionately concentrate school districts' resources on college preparatory programs for middle-class children, they typically practice at least a rudimentary form of equity that requires some degree of racial balance, and they cannot guarantee admission to all white middle-class applicants. As choice invites suburbanites back to the city to enjoy their private pursuits at the expense of reinvigorated public services, they will displace and further marginalize the poor.

In the conservative imagination the divestment of state redistributive functions does not terminate responsibility for the less fortunate. Rather, such responsibility becomes voluntary, an act of private choice. Much, in fact, is made of the public spiritedness of the affluent who voluntarily participate in contributing to the common good. Enormous publicity, for instance, has attended the offer of New York businessman Eugene Lang and several others to guarantee college scholarships to low-income school children, as well as to provide various supportive academic and counseling services to see them through high school. Oddly, we hear little about the federally funded TRIO programs that realized such practices worked decades ago. They have a long record of demonstrated success limited only by funding that is inadequate to reach more than a small percentage of the eligible population.[18] Massive federal support of such initiatives, in fact, is paramount because Lang and a few other philanthropists devoted to equity are exceptions. As U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich has pointed out, the wealthy contribute a lower percentage of their incomes to charitable purposes than the poor, and what they do give is disproportionately dispensed on elite cultural activities and institutions that serve themselves. Further, Reich notes that the much ballyhooed support of corporations for public schools is less than what they receive in the tax breaks they have successfully won.[19] Choice in giving, like choice in selecting private schools, provides a poor case that private spending will support the public good.

None of this is to say that public schools are beyond reproach. If they adequately served children of color, interest in "choice" would be limited and efforts to secure multicultural education unnecessary. Typically, students in public schools have suffered curricula that are ethnocentric and unquestioningly nationalistic. They also have experienced wide variation in academic quality based on their race and class. Author Jonathan Kozol, for instance, poignantly describes such grave inequities between public schools, underscoring the obvious unfairness of favoring the already advantaged with disproportionate resources.[20] Thus it might make sense to restrict choice programs to the underserved.[21]

OPPOSITION TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

This clearly is not what the Bush administration had in mind, however, since it steadfastly opposed affirmative action. Leading Republicans and conservative groups like the Landmark Legal Center for Civil Rights, which defended the Milwaukee Choice Program in the courts while it opposed the 1990 Civil Rights Act, merely view the Milwaukee program as an opening gambit in an effort to institute vouchers for everyone.[22] This agenda is explicit in a proposal for California initiated by the Excellence through Choice in Education League. The league's effort to place a state-wide measure on the November 1993 ballot mandating vouchers for all was articulated initially as a measure to serve low-income families only.[23]

If public education has inadequately fulfilled its responsibilities to educate all, market-driven educational enterprise cannot fulfill them. At best the popularity of choice among those with the least privilege should send a powerful message to public school educators that the common school for many remains a myth. It highlights the need to support a multicultural agenda that widens public discourse on equity issues and transforms public education in ways that enable people of color to exercise co-ownership of society. Yet the very idea of schools that educate people in common—drawing on the richness of diversity—is antithetical to the intent of the conservative leaders and foundations advocating choice.

Early in the twentieth century corporate elites claimed to take the schools out of politics by creating expert-run centralized and bureaucratic public schools. Their demand for efficiency and impartial expertise masked a politically motivated effort to replace working-class influence over education with their own influence. Today Chubb and Moe articulate the position of corporate elites who rail against the bureaucratic schools their predecessors were so influential in creating, once more claiming they want to take schools out of politics. Yet their desire to open them to the marketplace is also an inherently political strategy. It will enable the more affluent to free themselves from the yoke of all the legislative and legal safeguards people have won through the freedom struggles of the 1960s. It furthermore will free the rich from all public educational responsibility, striking a major blow against the current multiculturalist effort that seeks a radical expansion of democracy and a reinvigorated vision of community. The implementation of "choice" would be a victory for narrow class interest over community, accelerating the drastic maldistribution of opportunity that exists today.

NOTES

1. Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education," in Robert A. Solow, ed., *Economics and the Public Interest* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

2. The most notorious instance of this occurred in Prince Edward County where public schools were closed for five years. Blacks too were offered vouchers, but, committed to desegregation, they refused and many children received no formal education during that period. See J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and School Integration, 1954–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 98–100.

3. See Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945–1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

4. See especially National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983).

5. John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990).

6. *A Nation at Risk.*

7. See Lawrence C. Stedman and Carl F. Kaestle, "The Test Score Decline Is Over: Now What?" *Phi Delta Kappan* November 1985: 204–10; Lawrence C. Stedman and Marshall S. Smith, "Weak Arguments, Poor Data, Simplistic Recommendations," in Beatrice and Ronald Gross, eds, *The Great School Debate* (New York: Touchstone, 1985): 83–105.

8. Stedman and Smith, 90.

9. See, for example, Peter H. Rossi and James D. Wright, "Best Schools—Better Discipline or Better Students? A Review of High School Achievement," *American Journal of Education* 91 (November 1982): 82; comments on John Witte's unpublished paper presented at 1990 meeting of American Political Science Association, *Education Week*, November 14, 1990, 20.

10. David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976): 132–33.

11. Chubb and Moe, 221–22.

12. James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1861 to 1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

13. W.E.B. DuBois, "Pechstein and Pechsniff," *The Crisis* 36 (September 1929): 314.

14. Policies have included federal highway subsidies, segregationist FHA loans, zoning ordinances, and legal standing for restrictive covenants. See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 293. Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, *Schooling for All: Class, Race and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1985): 217.

15. Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Plume, 1991): 302.

16. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*: 297–303.

17. See, for instance, Robert B. Reich, "Secession of the Successful," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 20, 1991, 42.

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18. See *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 3, 1991, A17.

19. Reich, "Secession of the Successful," 43, 44.

20. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991).

21. For advocacy of choice programs with redistributive goals, see John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, *Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 31; Henry M. Levin, "Educational Choice and the Pains of Democracy," in Thomas James and Henry M. Levin, eds., *Public Dollars for Private Schools* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983): 36–37.

22. The Landmark Legal Center is funded in part by the Bradley Foundation—*Milwaukee Journal*, July 23, 1990, 1, 4; for its opposition to the 1990 Civil Rights Act, see *New York Times*, October 21, 1990, 15.

23. *Education Week*, September 18, 1991, 1.

Is School Privatization the Answer?

by Martin Carnoy

For conservatives and even some liberals, privatizing public schools has become the solution to the nation's "education crisis." Given American values about competition and choice, this sounds like a great idea, especially since the discussion is unclouded by empirical data on educational systems where there is choice and privatization. Yet such systems do exist, and—contrary to present claims—their experience suggests that voucher plans promise a lot but may actually make most children in schools worse off.

According to conservatives, the main problem with public schools is that they are public—they are managed by government bureaucracies and staffed by unionized, tenured, and largely unaccountable teachers. If only we could hire private management companies to run public school districts or, even better, get a "voucher" or "school choice" plan going that included public and private schools, they claim, students would learn more and schools would cost less, or at least cost no more than they do now.

The argument is persuasive because of our underlying values about monopolies and competition. The purpose of school choice and vouchers is to break the "monopoly" of the public sector over education and to increase competition in the educational sector. Allegedly, this would lower the cost of pupil achievement, or increase pupil achievement (school quality) for a given cost. But beyond these claims, school choice advocates claim that publicly subsidized private schooling would give the poor the same options as the rich, allowing low-income parents more equal opportunity to improve their children's education by sending them to private schools.

"Is School Privatization the Answer? Data from the Experience of Other Countries Suggest Not" by Martin Carnoy, reprinted with permission from *Education Week*, July 12, 1995. © 1995 by Martin Carnoy.

Fully subsidized private education has existed in Europe since the 19th century. In Belgium and the Netherlands, all schools, whether private or public, get an equal amount of funding from the government for each student enrolled. More recently, the Conservative government in Britain, although shying away from instituting a voucher plan, did develop an Assisted Places Scheme in the 1980's, designed to help youths from low-income families attend the high-cost independent private schools. And in 1991, the Conservative Party in Sweden implemented a nationwide voucher plan.

European data suggest that providing subsidies for private education benefits higher-income families.

John Ambler's analysis of school-choice plans in Britain, France, and the Netherlands ("Who Benefits From Educational Choice? Some Evidence From Europe," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 1994) shows that "the primary negative effect of school choice is its natural tendency to increase the educational gap between the privileged and the underprivileged." Even though the gap already existed in public schooling, the European data suggest that providing subsidies for private education benefits higher-income families even more.

Mr. Ambler's conclusions about the equity effects of privatization in Europe are based primarily on the socioeconomic makeup of those pupils who take advantage of private education, not what happens to different young people from various social classes when they are in public and private schools. But there is a well-developed, long-operating voucher plan in Chile where pupils have been assessed regularly. The Chilean plan, begun in 1980 under the Pinochet government as part of an overall Chilean "de-governmentalization" free-market package, meets almost all the choice with equity advocates' conditions for educational reform, including mushrooming fully subsidized, privately run, completely unregulated voucher schools competing head-on for pupils with municipality-run public schools in all metropolitan neighborhoods, from middle-class suburbs to low-income barrios.

What were the results of this reform? The first was that even when parents' contributions are included, total spending on education fell quite sharply after increasing in the early 1980's. In 1985, the federal contribution was 80 percent of total educational spending, and total spending was 5.3 percent of the gross national product. Five years later, the federal portion was 68 percent of the total, and the total had fallen to 3.7 percent of the GNP. So private spending rose but not quickly enough to offset an 18 percent drop in real federal contributions.

The second result was that in Chile, as in Europe, those who took advantage of the subsidized private schools were predominantly middle-and higher-income families. Of families in the lower 40 percent of the income distribution in 1990, 72 percent attended municipal public schools. In the next-highest 40 percent, only 51 percent of families sent their children to public schools, with 43 percent in subsidized private school. And in the top 20 percent of income, only 25 percent had their children in public schools, 32 percent in subsidized private and 43 percent in paid private schools. So with the 1980 reform, fewer public resources went to the poor and the middle class, but the middle class and the rich were able to meet the decline with their own resources. The poor were not.

Fewer public resources went to the poor and the middle class, but the middle class and the rich were able to meet the decline with their own resources.

The third result was that the increases in pupil achievement predicted by voucher proponents appear to have never occurred. Scores in Spanish and mathematics from two nationally standardized cognitive-achievement tests implemented in 1982 and 1988 for 4th graders registered a national decline of 14 percent and 6 percent, respectively. According to the World Bank economist Juan Prawda, the test scores fell most for low-income students in public schools, but they also fell for low-income students in subsidized private schools. Middle-income students had small increases in test scores whether they were in public or subsidized private schools. Subsequent tests in 1990 showed increases over 1988 of 9 percent in Spanish and 11 percent in math, but this still left scores about the same as in 1982. Middle-income students averaged higher scores on these tests in private schools than in public, but lowest-income students tended to do better in public schools. Taryn Rounds's estimates of pupil achievement as a function of type of school, location, parents' education, and students' socioeconomic class using the 1990 test results confirm that lower-social-class students did better in public schools on both the Spanish and math tests, and middle-class students did better in subsidized private schools.

Because low-income parents were less able to add private contributions to the voucher amounts, private schools in Chile were apparently not that interested in doing any better than public schools with lower-income pupils. And if the declining scores in Chile's municipal public schools mean anything, it is that increased competition had a negative effect on teachers and children, and that the Chilean voucher plan contributed to greater inequality in pupil achievement without improving the overall quality of education.

Neither had the private schools cost any less, even though they paid their teachers lower salaries. Indeed, many teachers taught both in private and public schools, double shifting. Government made no effort to improve the curriculum, the quality of teaching, or the management of education, since this was supposed to happen spontaneously through increased competition among schools vying for students. It did not. Yet, the test-score results suggest that the poor still made the right choice in sending their children to municipal schools, since they do better there.

The lessons for us here in the United States are obvious, but not ones that privatization advocates want known. Voucher plans increase inequality without making schools better. Even more significantly, privatization reduces the public effort to improve schooling since it relies on the free market to increase achievement, but the increase never occurs.

What is most disturbing about this reality is that the privatization movement in this country is gaining just when pupils from all groups, especially those who have traditionally not done as well in school, are making significant achievement gains, and they are doing it because public education is getting better—without vouchers.

Why Not Privatize?

by Deborah Meier

Privatization has emerged as not merely the latest fad but one of the most tenacious of the reform ideas and a powerful threat to public education. We need to deal with it since it has developed a life of its own and rests on its own set of false claims about the role of competition in school improvement.

The case for privatization—providing citizens with vouchers to pay private school tuition, creating new publicly funded private schools, or taking the existing school system and turning it over to private managers—can sound compelling. The argument goes like this: Surely school people will be more responsive to their clients' wishes if their salaries rest on continued support and a competitor is already down the street or might be there tomorrow; the arrogance and run-arounds of public bureaucracies and civil service appointees wouldn't be quite so well-protected; to discourage privatization because it will improve things only for some is no more sensible than refusing to build any public parks or housing until we can guarantee the same for all. The concern that privatization will favor those already more favored would carry some weight, its supporters contend, if the public system we have weren't already set up to do precisely that. And there is evidence of a reasonable sort that even when dealing with more or less the same population, private schools have done a better job than typical public schools, at least in our urban areas. The argument for privatizing schools has been made well by John Chubb and Terry Moe in *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*. It sounds even stronger if private schools are counterpoised not to the lay-controlled neighborhood school of yore but to the centralized, federally monitored and standardized schools we're being promised for tomorrow—they would make "opting out" seem even more desirable for those able to do so.

Excerpted from *The Power of Their Ideas* by Deborah Meier. © 1995 by Deborah Meier. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

Of course, I believe that the case against privatization is strongest when rooted in the distinctive and essential strength of public schools—their connection to democratic public life. But while the central argument against privatization is the same as the argument for public education, it's worth making some separate observations.

The case against privatization is strongest when rooted in the distinctive and essential strength of public schools.

First of all, if accountability (for fiscal integrity, fairness, or academic outcomes) often seems lacking in public schools, our experience with private enterprise makes it hard to imagine anything likely to do worse in this realm. If you have trouble reading your latest board of education report, try the corporate report you get as a stockholder. The same holds true for scandals in public and private spheres. While it's interesting that we rarely feel outrage or the need to "do something" when frustrated by private rather than public agencies, the impact of mismanagement on the user is much the same in both cases. One may grumble about how hard it is to visit one's local public school or get a clear explanation for how each dollar was spent, but try calling your local private school with such requests! We actually hold private businesses to much lower standards on these counts than we do our public schools.

Second, there is no evidence when it comes to private schools that competition has improved their product. What's true is that competition affects which schools get the "best" students (and thus can charge more) and which get the leftovers. You know a good school by how many students it can reject. Nor is there evidence that the private schools that have gone under did less well for their students than the schools that succeeded. And in fact, innovation remains the exception, not the hallmark, of private education.

Third, while private schools can and often do foster high-order thinking skills and responsible citizenship (as my own did a half century ago), they're not required to do so "fairly." In fact, built into what makes them able to compete successfully is their sense of privilege, including the privilege of turning students away for not being "our type," "up to par," or "of high potential." This dismissive view of fellow citizens is not directed only at those of a different race, class, or gender, but also at students who are having a rough time and for whom success is not coming easily. The higher the reputation of the school the more it prizes itself on such selectivity, "cutting off the weaker limbs to enable the tree to grow stronger," as a friend of mine once put it to explain why certain children were dropped at each successive grade level from her school. "It wouldn't be fair to *them*," she insisted.

Privatization is a pulling back from concern for our shared public fate.

We have more evidence than ever that such tracking by class or academic abilities is not good for educational outcomes even in their narrowest sense. But more is at stake. At a moment in history in which our destiny never depended more on reaching out beyond our immediate circles, the private necessity to do so has never been less frequently experienced. The capacity to create private enclaves in which everything from education to security is handled outside the public domain is reminiscent of too many science fiction tales that were intended to scare us a mere decade or so ago. Private institutions, after all, are suited to responding to their particular paying clientele, rather than to any larger common good. Even the best of private schools cannot rise far above such norms. While they proclaim their intention to train tomorrow's leaders, they forget that in a democracy this is not best done in the absence of those to be "led."

Fourth, we need to remember that for some proponents of privatization the motive is not personal self-interest but the self-interest of ideological, ethnic, linguistic, or religious group separatism. Although the church/state struggle has been with us for a long time, it is strengthened today by the alliance between the Catholic school systems' traditional interest in public subsidies for parochial schools and a growing Christian fundamentalist interest in undermining "godless" public schools and subsidizing Christian education. Other, smaller religious and ideological sects lend important support to this alliance in particular areas of the country. Their interest in privatization is based not on the virtues of the marketplace but on the virtue of getting public money for private, separatist concerns.

What all forms of privatization hold in common is a pulling back from concern for our shared public fate. They reward us for arriving at solutions that ignore, compete with, or even injure our neighbor's child without having to think about the possible consequences. No questions asked. In making private decisions parents never have to explain themselves or look their neighbor in the eye.

It's strictly personal, after all. Who can blame you for doing the best for your own? No harm meant. The cumulative effect of our "private choices," especially on those least able to exercise choice in powerful ways, is thus blurred over until it appears to be another law of nature—some have better luck than others. The notion of the rearing of the young as a communal task is lost, begins even to sound silly and sentimental.

In the end, of course, the marketplace undermines the rationale for public funding. If we assume always the primacy of our private interests over our public ones we're not far away from claiming an absence of responsibility for the next generation by anyone but those directly interested—parents. Why should all citizens be expected to finance what is thus only a matter of individual private gain? Why should the childless? The old? But what then happens when parents alone must subsidize the full cost of education? As the public subsidy dwindles, naturally some will suffer far more than others.

Holding fast to the democratic promise of public education requires something hard but simple: a steadfast belief in the process of democracy, warts and all. It requires rejecting both the dictatorship of the marketplace and the dictatorship of the expert.

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Acknowledgments

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